Children of the Night

Mary Hulbert Rogers

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CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT

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BY

MARY HULBERT ROGERS

NEW YORK
DUFFIELD & COMPANY
1911

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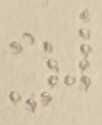

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No. 2

TO MY FATHER

even the professional meditators on Mt. Athos had to have something to look at in order to keep their thoughts "collected" as we say. Now that I cannot fix my eyes upon anything, I may not be able to fix my attention.

I shall not expect you every day of course. I hope that after a time I may be able to listen to reading. I cannot yet. I have always been the one to read to the rest and I do not attend when another reads, as I shall learn to do. I am annoyed by the emphasis, and imposition of meaning, which deprives me of the right to find my own meaning in what is read. While I am correcting or readjusting one sentence I lose another.

I try not to think of myself, but I fear that the best I shall do for the present is to think of my past self, or selves. When I go far enough back it hardly is myself. I am in my sixth edition — if we change all our particles every seven years as my old-fashioned teacher said. From an Oriental standpoint I may be in a much later edition. In any case the earlier editions were quite other persons. I sometimes wish that we changed all at once — Hindoo fashion — rather than like the proverbial vinegar barrel. We should seem more truly to have shuffled off the old coils.

Such little things I remember and brood over! Some trifling incidents recur so persistently that I want to tell them, to have them written down and disposed of — as one might dispose of things, I fancy, at the confessional, if the listener were very patient, or even fast asleep.

A foolish, childish blunder, a later inadvertence haunts me. It is like a foot-stool one stumbles over in the dark until it seems omnipresent. I wish I could mourn over my sins as I have done over my blunders.

If I could omit the repetitions it would not take me long to tell all the things I remember. My memory was never good. I have learned only by erosion.

Jack and his love, our marriage, the little dead boy that I did not see, are like parts of the other stories that I have read. I was proud of Jack's honours and promotions, proud when the papers were full of his praise, proud when the war was over, to have him come back to me — to know he was mine. When his ship was reported delayed, then missing, and finally lost, I waited — waited until my hope and pride went out together after long years. I grew to be so different from the wife Jack loved that I knew he

would not know me if he were to come back to me. Now that I cannot see, it will be one of my compensations that I shall not look at the young wives with brown hair and eyes and think that they must look as I did at thirty — when he went away.

I do not pity myself — yet. I have always thought that I would rather be blind than deaf. I am not so sure now. The question is less simple than when I had my choice. But, I do still think that I would rather be in utter, or outer darkness — as our older English had it — than go staring about a silent world.

The blind seem more tenderly cared for than the deaf, necessarily, as they are more helpless. They are more trustful. That always means more happy. I never knew practical jokes to be played upon blind people. One would hardly call Jacob's deceit of Isaac a practical joke, or Edgar's success in inducing Gloucester to leap from an imaginary cliff. I felt confirmed in my choice when I read, on one of my last bright days, that blindness and deafness were not objectionable on the stage, "though the latter seems only available for comic effects." When one seri-

ously considers the choice of an affliction, he is likely to prefer one which is not comic.

Still, I do not want sympathy. I quite understand how Socrates felt when he sent away the women, that their tears might not unnerve him. As he said, one must tread firmly when he enters a new world — or leaves an old one to wait in the antechamber of another as I am doing.

Are you ready now to write? Since you consented to come I have been busy deciding where to begin. At first I meant it to be with some of the wonderful journeys I made with Jack — when wives were not yet taboo. Then I went back farther and farther, and forgotten people came back to me until I was almost a child again among the dear old Newton people; and now I want to start at the very beginning, before ever we went to Newton.

My very earliest memory is of a flaming sky with turrets and pinnacles and battlements outlined upon it, and, swarming over all, wonderful black creatures with long, long tails — not men at all, but very much like men.

I thought for many years that it was the heaven from which I had come and that the creatures climbing up and down were angels

such as Jacob saw. They had probably brought me down.

When I had acquired a smattering of theology and developed a conscience, I feared it was the worse place to which I might go. Upon reflection, the creatures had been black, and armed with pitch-forks or something like them — and there were the tails and no wings!

After many years, when I found courage to ask about it, mother remembered that our father had caught me up in a blanket, when I was two years old, and carried me out to see a fire. She had protested in vain. He was young and liked to see what his first baby would do. Later ones he allowed to sleep.

I do not know that I am sorry. From the vividness of that first impression intensity may have been imparted to later ones. At any rate it makes still a brilliant back-ground to my life — whose further end will be dark enough.

II

GOOD morning! Are the blinds drawn so that the room is dark where I sit? The screen? Thank you. I have the old Greek feeling borne in upon me that blind eyes profane the sun. I like to be quite in the dark now that I have done with light. I do not mind being seen, exactly. I share old Milton's vanity, who rejoiced so constantly that blindness had not disfigured him.

No, I cannot think for a little. As I told you, my thoughts are wayward as Autumn leaves, fluttering into corners and then holding high carnival before my face — changing their identity as they change places. For a moment they stop altogether and then go off like bunches of fire-crackers all lighted at once.

Amy read last night from some book which said that Faith was the eye of the soul. So

I have one eye — I hope. I am a sort of Cyclops if some Ulysses of doubt does not creep into my cave and "punk it in" as little Madeleine said of her wax dolly's eye. Poor little mite! She used to run to her mother with her hand up feeling to see if her own eyes were not "punking in" too.

I tried again after you were gone yesterday, but I cannot remember anything after the fire until I was in my fourth year. We graduated that year from the theological seminary — at least, father did. John was almost two. When father and mother were married we did not expect to enter the ministry. We all boarded that last year with the Dexters, who were very, very kind to us and who loved our little mother dearly.

I remember that Mrs. Dexter used to cut for me paper plates and dust-pans which I arranged along the edge of the great, shiny library table, while she and mother sewed by the window nearest the big fireplace. When I had not enough paper dishes to reach to the end and asked for more, they told me to "Run away, dear" and I had to take some from the front to finish out the row. It was

a brilliant thought, and, with modifications, has been of great assistance on many occasions since.

I used to go across the Common from Mrs. Dexter's, on bright days, diagonally to the left and climb some stairs to the room where father and Chum studied. The trees were bare and I scuffled through the leaves with my dolly, Susie, in my arms. When my cloak was off my sleeves only came down to my elbows.

Father always set me up on a couch and tied my shoe and gave me a book to look at — a dictionary of Roman antiquities. The pictures were of gods and goddesses, and temples and graven arches and garlanded oxen — in outline only. I recognised the book long after and remembered that I had understood perfectly that the gods were not real and had been foolishly worshipped.

It seems strange that I understood what worship was at that age, quite as well as I do now. I wonder if I should be ashamed to admit it? Probably no one knows.

I remember that one day a dear little mouse ran about the room when I was in bed taking my nap. Mother did not wish me to be afraid of anything, "except God," she would add.

She always said how beautiful the lightning was and how soft and cunning little mice and squirrels were, but that day she ran for Mrs. Dexter and they stood up on things, with brooms, and told each other what to do. "The poor little mousie was only hunting for his hole," they said, but when George came to help it, he hurt it so that it died. We were so sorry!

I wrapped it in some pink paper to show it to father, but when I got there he was gone to a lecture. The door was left ajar for me so I went in and hunted for a nice place to put it. His boot seemed to be the safest, if it should wake up and want to run again.

I forgot it in the wonders of my book, but he found it when he took off his slippers to go home with me, and had more trouble about it than mother and Mrs. Dexter had.

I remember very vaguely that mother used to have a little baby in the bed and in her arms, and that when we all went to Lawrence one day to have our pictures taken, it was Alice. The sweet little face, which was hard to see in the old ambrotype, helped me always to remember her. My picture was good and Susie in my arms was best of all. John's picture was good too — only too fat.

III

MR. NELSON called again last night but I could not see him. Amy is unhappy that I seclude myself so entirely, but even for her, dear little sister! — I cannot — yet.

The doctor says I must sit in the sunshine? I will, by and bye. Last evening, late, I walked on the verandah. It is twenty-one paces, the length of it. Counting keeps the thoughts employed. I was very happy.

Do you remember how Tasso — or is it his translator? — writes about the sky? No other writer ever did it justice. Amy brought me the book and I could feel, or thought I could, the marks on the margins. I always would mark my books — the ones I expected to wear out myself. I am sorry now, but I could not know. I begged Jack not to get such extravagant editions, but he always would — prizing the "feel" of it, he said.

Mrs. Wilcox dropped in a moment yesterday,— of course I don't mind her,— and asked

if I did not wish I had always been blind; — not in those words exactly, but "didn't I think it would be easier not to have known what sight was, than to have lost it"! I felt like a man who told father there was no chloroform when his leg was cut off, and that people who spoke of it invariably asked if it hurt!

Here I sit all day long, thanking God for every leaf and shadow and insect I ever saw! Do you remember the shadows of the ripples in the brook at the foot of the Arnold hill? Not the ripples, but their shadows on the grey and creamy pebbles in the bed of the stream? When I was a little girl I used to take my book or my tatting and creep under the bridge in the hot summer days. Half a dozen planks formed the bridge and when teams drove over I held a paper, umbrella-wise, to keep off the dust. I selected an Eastern rug for Edith's wedding gift, because it had the colours of those shaded pebbles. The thought of them now gives me a thrill of pleasure.

Last night I thought how beautiful the fish-scales were, and of the different edges they had, then of the red-tipped lichens, and the mossy green of the elm-trunk on the corner

by Dr. Allen's, and the patch of raspberry bushes along the old corduroy road up in the Gore, whose stems were such an exquisite shade of lavender — covered with a lavender bloom, if stems have bloom.

Not to have seen! It would be annihilation.

Yes. They told me the sermon was about Bartimaeus, but I would not listen. I know Bartimaeus better than Mr. Nelson does. I had a long talk with him the other night, just pretending, as the children say. He told me how it seemed when he first looked about.

He thinks he would be blind the first half of his life rather than the last — if he must be at all. I did not agree with him. I prefer to have seen things first and have them to think about. He insists that he had more to think about before he could see, than after. He says he did not think so very much. He and the other men who begged on his corner used to make fun of people who pitied them. He admitted, when I reminded him, that he was quite in earnest about being cured of his blindness as soon as he heard that there was a man coming along who could do it.

Colours puzzled him most, and he had to learn not to feel of things. For a long time

feeling was more satisfactory than looking, because then he could compare objects with those he had known before. He did not know his own dog without feeling him over. He reminded me that people with plenty of eyes often told each other to "feel and see" how thick or heavy an object was, which he had always been able to do.

Besides, he did not know how to work, and it was hard to be thrown, at his time of life, on his own resources. He went hungry to bed oftener than he had done when he was blind. Of course, he could not foresee that, when he asked to have his eyes opened.

Amy has had a letter from the Burtons in New York, and they beg so hard that she will come to them for a day or two next week that I am urging her to go. I dare not think how I shall miss her, but I do not mean to let her shut herself up with me — besides, I have you.

No, don't you remember? Amy was not born until after we left Newton — the year before father died.

Father went to Newton as soon as he had finished at the Seminary. I was almost five. That moving was the most delightful ex-

perience! I do not remember any details except that I sat for some weeks on the floor behind the sofa and had a great many strange and usually sacred things to play with — boxes of shells and little red pease with black eyes from mother's India home. John was there too, and Alice, who must not creep away or put shells in her mouth or ears or anywhere. I felt a weight of responsibility and I must have taken good care of her, for there came a feeling of spiritual pride which has always warned me at intervals that perfection would quite unfit me for Heaven if Heaven be only for the poor in spirit.

When everything was in order, we had to leave the shells and inlaid boxes in the beautiful parlour by the front door into which we must not go alone, unless we had company, because the carpet was new, and the room was too cold. I did not want to go, either. Mother's Aunt Hoyt was hung in there, over the tall mantle of white wood that looked as if it was made of spools of thread, painted. She hadn't any frame yet but we were going to get her one — perhaps with wedding fees. She hung by hooks in her shoulder-blades and never, *never* took her eyes off me. Wherever I went she watched me, even behind chairs, and

directly under her. She could see without bending her head the least bit. I wondered what she wanted, and why she did not look at the others. She might know that I hadn't her frame!

She must be like God, I thought, watching to see "every naughty thing I did"— only He always rolled his eyes to look in corners.

Father's study was at the head of the stairs, beyond a darkish corner and near the Attic door. Be sure and make a capital A for the Attic please, it gives a classic flavour to any building if one remembers. We always fell down when we ran up to show him dead birds or pullets' eggs. John forgot to step up the last stair, and I ran up one too many. Alice always came behind. I do not recall that we ever fell *down* those particular stairs.

The sitting-room was under the study, and the bedroom opened off it, on the east side toward the garden, which was down hill. Alice and I slept in the trundle-bed. The big bed swallowed it in the day time. Sometimes, when our father was away, we could not get it out, it stuck so, and we had to get into the big bed till he came.

It used to take a very long time to get undressed at night, and longer still to get

dressed in the morning. I dreaded the dressing when I got into bed at night. Some of my clothes were sure to be lost after John had scrabbled them over to find his.

The kitchen was next to the sitting-room. We ate in the dining-room end of it. I had to hold my knife in the hand toward the woodshed door and have done so ever since. When company came and I had to sit on the other side of the table, and try my very best to "act like a little lady," I always held it in the wrong hand and had to be corrected. John had to hold his knife in the hand toward the pantry door, and got left-handed. They might have known!

I forgot the bear in the corner of the bedroom behind the big bed. I was always sure he was a she-bear, like the ones that ate up so many poor little Bible children — whose mammas had not told them how to be polite to people. When it was light he did not show. He — or she — never really came toward us, but he would get up on his hind legs ready to start. I can see him this moment!

When I got too scared and he just began to take the first step with one of his hind legs, and his eyes *had* started, I used to call out very quickly, that I was thirsty or too

hot. As soon as the door was opened I could see that he was only a corner. I tried to keep Alice awake, so they would not blame me for waking her up.

I have hardly, since, prayed to God with such agony of appeal as when I used to beg that a crack might be left in that door! I rejoice that the time has come when bears are not bug-bears: when they submit to being hugged.

IV

I DO not wonder you forget the order in which we came. You see, I was born before we went to Andover, John during father's first summer vacation and Alice just before he graduated — Margaret and Hal and Amy all came later, Amy after Alice died. Sometimes I grow confused myself.

Amy promised to write Mrs. Burton that she would come for a few days, and Mr. Nelson is to spend the evening with us to-night. It seems he has some church matters to consult me about! I feel unusually brave to-day. Mrs. Arthur Hammond called with her little boy and I couldn't refuse to see her. She and Margaret were in college together. I was there with them one year, but I was a low-down "special" and lived off the Campus, so that I did not know her well. She asked if I should not like to "put my hand on the baby's face to see how he looked — whether he was like her."

I fear I did choke a bit at that, but she did not notice it. I told her, No, that I had not yet learned to make out much by touching things — and she did not insist. She added as a half apology, that she had forgotten my trouble was so recent. A few years' time, more or less, *is* rather a slight matter.

I had a foolish fear, all the while, that the child was looking at me. There is something about a child's eyes that has always awed me. Hal and Arthur had a way of looking over my shoulder, as if they saw something which I could not, especially at night.

Any physical deformity or abnormity seems to fascinate a child. Mother used to tell me not to look at Mr. Walter's thumb that was cut off, but I just had to, to see if it was not perhaps grown out since I saw it before. It took the whole dinner hour sometimes to get a good look. If my faith and good will had availed it would have grown again.

Once Mr. Walters asked Hal, I remember, how old John was. He thought a moment and said, "He'll be eight next June *if he lasts.*" Mother exclaimed at that, but he said very stolidly and seriously "Alice didn't."

After the first break, there always seems to

be an "if" with every one, and a silent, if not spoken, "Alice didn't."

When we were little children father often came in to kiss us good-night after mother had given us the finishing touches. I remember that one night when the snow was piled in masses all about the house, and there were broken wreaths and trailing garlands of frost-flowers on the window panes, glistening in the moonlight, he said, "Now think of all the little squirrels and rabbits snuggled in their holes and go to sleep."

From that time to this I pray nightly for all the little creatures tucked away in their nests, and worry about the naughty ones that are prowling about out-doors.

Yes. I worry about them, but I am sure that if I were a creature myself I should prowl all night. To be out in the wild night alone, has been for years, in my mind, the very supreme of freedom. I revel in the thought till I am giddy.

Do you remember in the *Centaur* that Macareus says of his youth, "I bounded whither I would, a blind and chainless life"? And that the very blindness seems an added

freedom? It is as if sight were a restriction, involving limitation and responsibility.

The idea is quite comprehensible to me now. I find myself, shut out from my old employments and necessarily a part of the general social impedimenta, accepting release from old duties as one of the compensations; and with release from duty comes a sort of recklessness. Not physically but mentally comes the temptation to "bound whither I will, a blind and chainless life."

Things which would have shocked me, when I had only time to glance at them in passing, I do not fear to think now. There seems to be no condemning Presence — only the Darkness —"that absolute darkness which is the pity of the gods." I seem to be enfolded in it — protected and cherished by it.

V

THEY all went to Mrs. Carton's to tea last night, and I sat on the porch in the moonlight — at least, I thought I was in the moonlight until they came home and told me that clouds had gathered, and it was so dark Amy had torn her dress upon a wire.

I had been quite happy. A cricket chirruped so near me that I did not dare move for fear of crushing it. I do not wonder that the Japanese buy little insect creatures in cages to sing for them. Katy-dids would be a real comfort to me if Arthur had not said once that they seemed to repeat Hal's "Alice didn't." I love them now, but they seem always to be mourning for our little dead sister, and when I listen to them sometimes, a tear comes — a blind tear that seems almost an impertinence. I think of her more than I have done before.

When the cricket found me too stupid and crept off to bed, I amused myself with inventing a Club. Yes, a real Club. The mem-

bers of it are all blind but I think you might call it a literary club. We have several literary people in it, and enough others to admire them properly. They are too busy to admire each other much.

There is Milton, of course, and Homer, and Isaac and Ossian and old Polyphemus, who is bound over to keep the peace and promises not to throw islands at people.

Samson is a member, and Justice and Cupid and Nydia and Hope and Faith. I cannot remember them all, nor tell the order in which they have been enrolled.

Charity applied for admission, but she is not blind, so of course we could not let her in. Her own sisters black-balled her. I am not quite sure that Justice is stone-blind, but she says she is, and after admitting her as a charter member we cannot very well raise questions as to her eligibility or her credentials.

Speaking of "stone-blind" reminds me of sand-blind and Shakspeare's high-gravel blind. I wonder which is positive and which superlative. I must break myself of worrying about words and what they come from. It is a bad habit when one cannot hunt in dictionaries one's self.

John used to call me a dictionary fiend. That sort of devil is in a fair way to be starved out of me now. Do you remember Lamb's Poor Tobin who did not regret his sight so much for the weightier kinds of reading as because he "missed the pleasure of skimming over with his own eye a magazine or a light pamphlet"?

Now we shall have time for a lot of biography. Don't, I beg, let me ramble off with that silly Club!

I must go back a little, and you will have to rearrange later. When I was a little less than six years old Mrs. Boynton, whom we dearly loved, happened to be down at our house one night and to invite me to go home with her to sleep. It had been my fondest ambition to stay away from home for a whole night. There was a flavour of recklessness about the thought which exhilarated me. I had never been allowed to do so, but Mrs. Boynton seemed to possess a magic influence that won the day, though even she had to plead.

We had a delightful evening and I got to bed without any touch of homesickness — though I wished Alice had come too. Before

I fell asleep I felt a twinge of it, and even suggested going home and coming some other night, but it was too late. In the night I awoke and cried. Not willing to hurt Mrs. Boynton's feelings I told her that I was very happy with her, but I thought it "would be pleasanter to die at home."

My spirits revived in the morning, and I had some real dough of my very own — dark blue dough, I can see it now,— and was rolling out pie crusts on a chair with a broken knife handle for a rolling pin, when father dashed up through the snow banks and said I must leave my beautiful pies and come home with him quickly to *see my baby sister.*

Of all nights in the world! I never liked Mrs. Boynton so well after that, although I knew she could not help it. In my vexation I told John that "it was just like her"— which was the worst that could be said of anybody.

That was Margaret. Two years later Hal was born. I do not remember any of the particulars, only he was baptised at home and not at church because some of the church people thought four children enough for a minister on a small salary "and war prices." I did not

know at the time why he was not taken to the church like John and Alice.

Whenever I hear those Bates children go by, I think how I used to take care of Margaret and Hal — Hallie we called him. A mother would have been thought lacking in natural affection in those days, who called a baby by its bare name.

We had a new second-hand baby carriage for him. There were no Indian "buggies" then. It had two wheels and a handle in front to pull it by, and a cross-stick to hold on to. This came out easily, but we could stick it back through the hole, and when it was lost father *could* make another. There was an iron brace that held it up in front when no one was drawing it. Alice and John usually went along to help in case of emergency.

We had four-plank walks with wide cracks running lengthwise. When the wheels got into them, or ran off the edge plank, the baby always fell out and we had a great mess. Folks had to run out of houses — cross as bears sometimes — and get us picked up.

If we forgot, the least minute, and let go, the whole thing went over behind and the

handle stuck straight up in the air. It was harder to find the baby then, than when we tipped it over sidewise — or sideways, which is it?

VI

MISS AMES? I was sure it was your step. I am glad you are come, though I am not lonely. Mr. Nelson comes every morning now that Amy is away. I wonder that I hesitated so long to see him.

A long letter came at noon. She is having a delightful time. She has met an old friend of ours at Mrs. Burton's, a Mr. Kennedy who has some title which I forget. We knew him quite intimately during John's college days and Jack loved him very dearly. Indeed, Jack always insisted that he admired me. Husbands do not like to admit that they had no rivals. He went to India for some business firm soon after we were married and has never been home since. Jack and I hoped to see him when we were there but failed somehow.

Amy admires him extremely. I am amused and surprised at her enthusiasm. I am glad she went.

Yes, the Club met last night. Thank you for reminding me. I had a long talk with

Nydia which I must tell you about sometime. It reminded me of one day in London when the fog was so dense that people could not find their way. Even the policemen had to beg the blind beggars to lead them about.

Two new names are on our waiting list, Romney Leigh and Mr. Rochester. We are not sure that they will care to join without Aurora and Jane. The committee will find out before we vote.

Homer saw me home — if I may use the old phrase. We sat for a while, talking on the swing-house steps, as Jack and I used to do. He says he was only joking about the Trojan War and never expected to be taken so seriously. Helen and Paris were down in Egypt all that while. "Do you suppose Paris was so popular," he asked, "that the Trojans would coop themselves up within their little walls for ten years, to help him keep another man's wife — not fairly come by, at that — with Œnone's friends all up in arms against him?

"Besides," he went on, "it did not matter what Trojans would do. Did I suppose the Greeks would go off and fight ten years for a huzzy like Helen and leave their own wives, Clytemnestra and the rest, to show what

mice were likely to do when the cat was away?"

He says he is really proud to have made up such an interesting story about people who were all fools on both sides, and to make so many people believe it to be true.

I told him that our American Confucius said no one could fool all the people all the time. He laughed and said:

"It has been done."

What should we do if we could not "pretend"! I am crying this moment — but nonsense does me good. What learned critic is it, who says there really is not truth enough to satisfy our cravings — when we sift it all out? Then he adds that it "would be madness to deny ourselves the resources of the imagination."

I may as well get what pleasure I can out of the Club.

This morning I somehow fell to thinking of little Josey Palmer, who has probably smaller Joseys of her own by this time. When she had learned to walk she insisted upon going with her father everywhere. He was a Professor of Greek, and so absent-minded that he never noticed her. She amused herself by

walking behind him and trying to step in his footprints. They were a funny pair, going back and forth to the Academy, which stretched across the end of the long straight road, like the arms of a great cross lying against the foot of old Mount Equinox. Mrs. Palmer had so many other babies she never missed her, and she kept it up for years, until at last the family awoke to the fact that she had acquired a very extraordinary gait, stretching her little legs far ahead with every step, and halting a bit as she brought up the other foot.

That is the way I have done all my life — intellectually and morally. I have tried many gaits — Mary Lyon's and Fidelia Fisk's, Emerson's and Thoreau's, David Brainerd's and Marcus Aurelius' and Stevenson's and President Finney's, and plenty of others I should not like to mention, between times, who took shorter steps and toed in or out.

Most of the time I have tried to stalk in seven-leagued boots. Now here I am, forced to sit by the wayside and listen to the footfalls of others, whom I may not follow. After a bit, I may find a stick with which I can "move on" if so commanded.

I cannot well ask people to read Holy Liv-

ings to me and Helps and Daily Foods. Of course the Bible is all right, but it is not predigested. I am sorry I never learned more of it by heart. I cannot even remember where the good parts are, and Amy does not seem to find them. When we get desperate and open it at random we stumble upon denunciations and curses instead of comfort.

"I reckon you-all could get some good out of the badness," old Abram told me as he rested from his lawn-mowing one day. I did not thank him for his Delphic response at the time, and could not well do so later. Abram is a great Bible student and has most of the prophecies unravelled.

VII

THIS morning has been so lovely that I could bore you with my mercies. How well I remember the first time I thought that one could be grateful for mere air. I was at Bread Loaf Inn, twenty years old at least, and the guests were sniffing and exclaiming about the wonderful air with what seemed the baldest affectation. It seemed to me that God could not expect us to be thankful when he gave us so much of a thing that we never knew we had any. I remember saying, "We might as well be thankful for light!"

We found out quite accidentally to-day that Mr. Nelson knows Mr. Kennedy. At least he had a cousin who went out in the same ship and when he died it fell to Mr. Kennedy to write to the family and to send back the few things he had left. Ever since that they have corresponded and Mr. Nelson hopes for a visit from him. Amy seems so happy about it! It is just another of the impossible coincidences which are always happening, that it

should bring him back to the old town, once so familiar to him.

I came out alone this morning for the first time — did I tell you? It was very early. I am not sure whether it was light or not. I wanted to feel the bare earth under my feet, but I feared things would crawl on me, so after a while I sat down behind my vines. A wide-blown morning glory hung over my head, I knew by the buzzing of a bee — interrupted while he ravished it.

No. The Club forgot to meet last night. I was too busy with Amy. She hit upon a most exquisite place in the Bible, and I went to sleep repeating over and over "The sun shall not smite thee by day nor the moon by night," and the "pestilence that walketh in darkness" ought to comfort me.

That "moon by night" puzzles me. It sounds as if the moon really could hurt people. Would God promise to protect us from ills which only idolatry and superstition threatened?

How I used to love the moon, my Diana, my Isis, my Hathor, my Istar! All the old pagan fibres in me stirred when I looked at

her. No one was ever so little spoiled as she by foolish adoration, or bore so coldly and regally her honours! Did my eyes sin in looking at her?

I fell asleep thinking about the verses — not the moon — and dreamed that I was blind. Is it possible that later I shall be blind in my dreams? To dream that I am blind is quite another thing. At present I do all my seeing when I am asleep, and my dreaming when awake.

To see is to be, for do not the old Hindu books say that Brahma existed when there was "nothing else blinking whatsoever." If I stop seeing in some way, I must have ceased to be.

Mrs. Elmer Arnold happened by as I was finishing my coffee and had the extra cup, put in "for the pot" as we say. She told me among other things that she was run away with once, when *he* was alive. She had the farm horses and wagon and her two children. As soon as she "saw that it was a real runaway" she told the children to lie down flat on the wagon box and she knew she could guide the horses if she could not stop them.

"So," she went on, "I just fastened my eye on the right front wheel and made up

my mind that I would keep that in the track and let the rest take care of themselves."

Once safely home she had thrown herself into a chair and begun to cry — to Johnny's great astonishment. He begged her not to, adding, "I think you come home *noble*."

If we break the law in one point we are guilty of breaking it as a whole. If one wheel is out of the track they are all out. I wonder — If we can manage to keep it perfectly in any one point, may we not get credit for keeping it all?

It might be comparatively easy to keep one wheel in the track — or to keep one law. If our attention is fastened upon that we shall not have time to break the rest and may "come home noble" at last, as many cranks and hobby-riders, no doubt, do.

There again, I have "whipped my horses without looking where I was going" — and come out at an absurdity!

VIII

AMY read this morning and again I picked out a queer bit to remember. "Blessed are those who have not seen." There may have been some more to it, but I have forgotten. It is somewhere among the Beatitudes, I suppose — easy enough to find. I must take time to think about it. Of course there are many things it is better not to have seen.

There is a verse I try not to think about — somewhere in Job. It says that if a man breaks the ninth commandment God will put out his children's eyes. I am glad that it only forbids us to say false things *against* our neighbours. The world would be full of blind children if we were forbidden to say polite things about people — at least, to them.

This has been one of my bad days. I think it is because I had a panic last night. My Christian Graces all stampeded. It will wear away but I must see that it does not happen again. The feeling came over me that

I would not be blind — that I was a fool to accept such a condition. I knew that I could get out — like any rat from a trap.

There must be some knowledge of divinity within us, since the inevitable is so utterly incomprehensible. It implies the subconsciousness of omnipotence. Yet, when most utterably and inalterably determined to see, I find my only hope is to —" jump into a bramble bush and scratch 'em in again!"

When I fancy myself a Moslem, and my trial due to Fate I am quite at rest; when the thought comes upon me that it may be Karma — my own fault in some previous state — it is torture — such as Dives felt.

I have never told about the lamb Mr. Hunt gave me before Margaret was born, or soon after; no, before; — old Sol Hunt, who lived out past the railroad, beyond the forty-acre lot, full of stumps and red-raspberries, if there had not been so many snakes we did not dare go in and pick.

How I loved that lamb! I took it with me when I went on errands, and had a prophetic fear that it might disappear while I was gone.

One day it did disappear when Jennie let

me go strawberrying with her down to the Meacham lot.

I looked for it in all the corners and sheds and barn and wagon-house, down cellar, behind the currant bushes, and at old man Akey's, of whom I'll tell you. Then I got my playmates to help me search the highways and hedges, and inquired of incoming farmers if they had seen it along the roads.

It was all in vain and I mourned and wept for it many weeks. One day a man slung a bundle at me as he went by and called out:

"Here, sissy, tell your mother here's her lamb skin rug."

My lamb had been killed and eaten up, on our own table, myself sharing the unnatural feast in classic style!

On various occasions a wabbly calf with a crooked tail had wandered into our barnyard, and the question of raising it had been discussed. So far as I remember it was always decided in the negative and the calf disappeared as mysteriously as it had come, through no fault of its own apparently. My lamb had never been spoken of as in jeopardy and I accounted it a sure possession.

But I am coming now to real trouble.

A few days after Margaret was born, when

we had just begun to wonder how we ever got on without her, old Father Morgan came along — a "Children's Preacher," he was called when he got old, and only wandered around, preaching whenever he got a chance. We were accustomed to his visits and when he had shaken hands and given me an apple and Alice two peanuts, father brought out the new baby to see "what he thought of *that*." Mother was sick that day, but they looked it all over and I helped them find the feet.

When we got it done up again as well as we could, Father Morgan said with judicial deliberation, "I guess she's worth raising."

The familiar phrase struck me with horror. They might at any time change their minds. Father had only said in reply:

"Yes, we'd about made up our minds to hold on to her." So it was not settled! From that time I had no rest, night or day. If I had known the feeling in the parish I'm sure I could not have endured the suspense. I begged not to be sent on errands, and dared not leave mother alone with it for a moment. When offered meat at the table, I refused it until I had run to the crib to make sure Margaret was not on the platter. Often she was crying, which was an unspeakable comfort.

How the dread wore off, I cannot say. For long months it was very real, and very terrible because incommunicable.

Yes. We had a Club meeting at Eleusis last night, sitting on broken capitals, which we fumbled about for, and listening to some belated archeologists taking "squeezes" a little way off.

Most of us settled down for a quiet talk, but Cupid and Nydia seemed to be out for a lark. They found handfuls of pebbles and played odd-or-even after a while and kept comparatively quiet. I could overhear their remarks now and then — which were very amusing. The funniest part of it was that they did not notice the arrivals and some of the people they talked about were within earshot.

Samson became decidedly emphatic when he heard Cupid telling her what a mess he had gotten him into once, and how he had lost his fine "suit of hair." They had to scamper off and finish their game somewhere else. At least, we saw no more of them.

I told Homer that you were surprised,— I did not wish to say incredulous,— about his repudiation of the Trojan War.

He insisted that he was quite serious, and told me another secret. Can you believe — he was paid to "write it up" by some of those Greek kings, who wished to have attention diverted from their own family troubles! A good many things went wrong about that time.

He did not care for the money, of course. Being a poet, he did not need it. But when he came to think it over, he agreed with them that it would be better to have one big scandal than a lot of little ones.

Menelaus objected at first, but he too realised that if the thing were well done it would be a sort of honour to him. At least, it would keep him before the public. I never did like Menelaus.

"Besides," Homer said, "it did Helen and Paris no injustice. They were a bad lot."

After all my years of credulity, I was quite out-done with Homer's flippancy. I did not know what to believe, but when I reverted to my childhood's oath and asked "Hope to die?" he laughed but said "Yes," with such emphasis as left no room for doubt. So that ends my responsibility.

Still, I do not know that our "Hope to die" is much of a test if one stops to think. We

do all literally hope to die, and any of us would rather die on the spot than not at all.

We had a long letter from Mrs. Burton to-day in answer to Amy's duty letter. They all enjoyed having her so much "especially their dear friend Mr. Kennedy." Indeed, half the letter was about him. It seems he owns some property — I do not know what — somewhere near Grenford and he may run up here. Mrs. Burton remembers my interest in the East and told Amy I might like to talk to him!

IX

YES, we are very fond of Mr. Nelson. Amy and I were in Europe when our dear old Dr. Kingsbury died, and we dreaded to come home and find a new rector in his place. Indeed, I think we delayed our return for that reason, though we did not admit it to each other. The house was shut up, and although we had lived here a year without father we had never arrived after a long absence without finding him to greet us. That, again, led us to delay.

When we landed in New York the Burtons met us and told us about Mr. Nelson, who was the son of some old friends of Mr. Burton's; — that he had come to Grenford, and that we were sure to like him. He was rather high Church, but would get over that gradually. His parents had feared he would join a Brotherhood because he had defended somebody's ideas of celibacy.

We found him all that the Burtons had said, and very considerate about assuming that he

could fill Dr. Kingsbury's place, or forcing his attentions upon us in any way. I was never much help to him. I left Amy to do the Lady Bountiful for both of us, perhaps because she was so much younger. In some ways I was not in sympathy with him. He preached things I did not believe. Perhaps it was fear of theological consolations that made me slow to receive his calls. I need not have been so. It was part of my general churlishness.

That reminds me. Mr. Kennedy has come up to make him a visit. They would have called yesterday if I had felt quite well. They did come for Amy on their way to Mrs. Bennets to dine. I had accepted the invitation for her and insisted upon her going.

They sent their cards to "Mrs. De Lon" and Amy half begged: "*May* they not come out to you, Oudene?"

"Not to-day, dear," I said, with my cheek on her hand.

I think she is afraid to be happy, lest it seem to threaten disloyalty to me. I cannot tell her, yet, that I am glad for her. I am sure she will come to understand me. My trouble makes it necessary for us to readjust ourselves to each other, the more carefully

because we are so close. It is hard for her to realise that I like being alone, and that I am getting "on in years" and should care less and less for society under any circumstances. In a month I shall have finished two and a quarter of my three score years. It is no secret now.

It was very sweet of Mrs. Bennet to help Mr. Nelson entertain his guest. Amy says that he is a delightful conversationalist and story-teller, and his Indian life has given him a fund of interesting experience. He seems really to have studied their old books and traditions. One or two questions I do want to ask him, for my own sake and for Amy's. I have quite made up my mind to receive him to-morrow.

After Amy went, Abram happened by and asked if he should not go and tell you I was alone. I said "No." I can still "see through" some of these things that "happen."

I like the feeling of twilight, and to watch the sun set, with my ears. I never knew, when I could see, how gradually and regularly the sun-set sounds change. The old hens and the chickens and cocks have a long series of adjustments and consultations and readjustments before they finally settle down on the

fence-rail these hot nights. A few baby voices tired and fretful sound from mothers' arms. Weary children are called in from play. Mrs. Fitzgerald passed by the other night looking for her Mike, and apologised saying that she "had such a cold she couldn't half holler."

Horses stamp in the pasture or stable, lambs bleat, Kim creeps under the porch with a resurrected bone, which he gnaws voluptuously.

I have heard that in China if one asks the time of day, any urchin will snatch up a cat, and tell by the look of its eye. It is not wonderful, for the dilation must vary every hour. It is only wonderful that the fact has not been noted here.

Each added star in heaven must make a change in every eye toward which it shines — and so every flickering candle on earth.

Perhaps our watching makes the stars and candles glow with a fuller light. It is said that a star passing over the emerald mines of Ytoco becomes brighter, "like the moon six days old." I wonder if all the light of one's eye might pass over into a star and leave him blind, as the lightning flash leaves its fire in

the heart of the opal which forms where it strikes.

Mr. Nelson and Mr. Kennedy both walked home from Mrs. Bennet's with Amy. They talked at the gate a moment and Amy called, "Are you there, Oudene?"

I did not answer, but when she came and sat on my stool and put her head down on my knees and sobbed, I said:

"Ask them to call to-morrow evening, dear."

X

I MISSED you yesterday. Somehow I feel sure that I never hurt you, however much you may be bored. I am always hurting Amy, though I am sure I do not bore her.

She was with me all the morning, hemming some napkins, and reading now and then. When she asked what she might read I called Abram and told him to go into the library and bring me a book. He came back with the "Tatler," holding it as if it were made of egg-shell, she said. She opened at random, as I bade her, and happened upon the story of a man who had been born blind, but had had his sight restored — which does not seem the right word — by an operation — a sort of vice versa to me.

Looking up at the doctor he supposed the instruments he still held were part of his hands. Recognising his mother by her voice, he looked at her and groaned, "Oh, me! are you my mother?"

"Were you always thus happy," he asked,

" when you said you were glad to see each other? "

His " Tom " had to lead him still, and the physician recommended that his eyes be bandaged until he had learned gradually to use them, as he had once learned to use his hands and his feet.

He asked " how many there were in all to be seen."

The woman he loved came and wished to undo his eyes that he might see her, but he " did not wish it done if it would destroy his love." Poor thing, how could she tell!

He had wished for sight " but to see you." What would it mean to each if sight should prove to be disillusionment? Which of them would suffer more? " Why run the risk? " she must have groaned within herself.

Even our talk about that hurt Amy!

I insisted upon sleeping in the afternoon. I really did drop asleep. Then I went out to the Club — walked out — to the Pincian Gardens!

Homer is not old — not so old as Cupid, even. On the whole, he is jollier than Cupid — heaps more fun.

I'm really surprised to find Cupid so serious. He rarely has such a frolic as the other night.

He told me, himself, that he had been found fault with till he was spoiled. I asked him if he had been shooting over our way lately, thinking of Amy.

"How do I know," he said, "am I not blind?" with a sort of touchy, chip-on-the-shoulder air, as if he expected to be scolded.

Really, it is fortunate that he is blind. There are so many "No Trespass" signs up, he would not know where to shoot if he could see them. They used to punish poachers in England by putting out their eyes. I wonder if he lost his by any such crime.

He has his regular beat around the equator, and makes side trips whenever he can arrange. He has promised a Mother's Club in New York to be in Newport to-morrow.

He gets so tired! Poor little chap! He has not had a vacation he says since — I forget when. He thinks if old Time would "quit scything around" for a few weeks, he could rest. As it is he has hard work to keep things going. In some countries where he shoots most the pop — things seem to run down fastest.

That is what dwarfed him. Being put to work so young he never had time for his growing pains.

No. I've not told you about the call. I only half kept my promise after all. I let Mr. Nelson come out and talk with me in the dark while Amy entertained Mr. Kennedy in the library. However, they are coming again. Mr. Kennedy has not to go back so soon as I feared. Mr. Nelson says he "may never return to India." I am not surprised. "Nor I," Amy laughed when I told her. She has not admitted so much before. *Was* it an admission?

Now may I tell about our Newton home? I do not mean to get off the track so.

The road in front of our house ran up hill toward the west, through the village and then down gradually to the railroad station a mile away. At the top of the hill, a hundred rods or so beyond our house, it passed the new store on the left, crossed Lanesborough Street, and passed between the Common and the great brick tavern on the right. This tavern had been once a famous stopping place for coaches on their way from Albany to Montreal.

The old store was on the further side of the Common. Next it, north, was the great white meeting house with a broken halo of horse-sheds, each stall owned by some "mem-

ber." The old pioneers had come from Lanesborough, Connecticut and laid out wide streets, to remind them of home, and planted elms before Arbor Day was invented.

To the east, our road ran on down the hill a little way, crossed a bridge constructed of two logs and three planks, ran between Mr. Parents's blacksmith shop and Mr. Brunell's shoe-shop — improper children left off the " Mister "— and on up the long hill, by Scrate Coy's where it seemed to come straight out of the blue heaven.

It was a clay road, dusty in Summer, fathomless mud during the Spring and Autumn, glorious white squeaky snow for full three months.

Teamsters drove by toward the station all day long with logs from the mountains, sometimes stretching away back from their long carts, and sometimes with the hind wheels dislocated and coming where the next team should have been. Sometimes the men had time to find me a bit of spruce gum while the horses rested. One often did.

When the roads were very muddy and the horses legs looked pitifully short, the men whipped them cruelly and said dreadful words

— as father did when he preached — only it was not wicked for him.

The roots of the elm trees before our house were coiled into beautiful seats. On one, just by the gate, I used to sit hours at a time and watch the tragedy and pray God to help the poor horses pull. I asked mother if He could and she said "Of course."

I told you we had a garden east of our house? At the far foot of it was a little cottage reeking with tobacco smoke. I used to be sent with flowers in pots, down for the plants to be "smoked." Two Canadians lived there, "old man Akey" and "Mom Akey" his wife. He was rheumatic and went on two canes held far before him — of unequal length and different "bents." At a distance he was a quadruped which might have nonplussed the very elect.

Mom Akey used to wash for us, retiring at intervals to her domicile for a pull at her little black pipe, which had given her an under lip like an elephant. She was very much in need of patronage and in her anxiety to please, she would say at mother's every approach, "You mad, Mom Adams?"

In such mood, and with such an interrogation, I find myself frequently, albeit unconsciously, approaching the Mercy-Seat. Poor old soul!

One night some wicked men came to steal our grapes. I was asleep but father slipped down from his study and ran out very quietly to catch them. He did not, though. He laughed about it at breakfast time, because one of the men ran hard against a board fence and fell "prone on his back" as Kenneth Graham says. He was grunting on the ground when father came home — not wishing to know who they were. Next day the man told somebody that "the minister ran like the devil." I heard father telling mother, and had to reconstruct my devilology. I did not know he could run. I had always seen him in the air, flying.

We had Bunyan's Complete Works, but always called them the Devil Books, they were so full of him. On the "holy Sabbath" they were our chief resource for entertainment, and he the charm of them. I caught him running in one place when I hunted it out.

XI

I'M so glad you are back.

Oh, my dear! It was not half so bad as I thought! Mrs. Bennet came with them, just after dark, and I called to them all to "Come and shake hands with the hermit." They came laughing and chatting and shook hands with "Mrs. De Lon." "Mrs. De Lon" and "Oudene, dear." I could not tell in the confusion whose hand was whose.

"Just smell those lindens!" Mrs. Bennet exclaimed. There is only one but it fills the air these days.

"You make these vines do wonders, Amy," she continued, and then went on to tell of some Bougainvillea she had seen at Terni in Sicily. The hot baths are in the basement, little white marble rooms, opening into a square court, of white marble too, whose glass roof was fairly loaded with masses of vines through which the sun poured. The colour varied from the faintest lavender to the deepest purple according to the density of the mass.

"I saw it at Malta," said the strange voice, "and have not yet decided whether the blue sea or the green foliage or the cascades of purple are more becoming to the warm brown of Maltese stone."

"Is Malta all one colour?" asked Mr. Nelson.

"Yes," he replied, "all a warm sunny brown. Houses and fort and churches and walls and roads are made of the rock, which is beautiful enough of itself, and quite intoxicating when it combines with the blue or green or purple. It never allows any two of these to approach each other."

They seemed to forget me altogether and I enjoyed it all extremely. I do not know why, I had supposed that if I were present they would feel that they must entertain me. How egotistical one gets, when shut away! Those old anchorities must have felt exceedingly important.

We had a letter last night from a friend — Mrs. Roscoe. It was written to Amy though I was always the one who kept up the correspondence. Now that confidences are impossible, it does not matter to which of us letters are written.

She sails in the "Slavic" Saturday, over the route Jack and I took to Gibraltar and Naples and the Azores. After we got over I wrote back about sailing the Spanish Main and was taken to task for not knowing that that disreputable sheet of water was in the Western Hemisphere. I could have proved that the Spanish Main was not water at all, but the mainland, and I would have done so if I had not known that the opposite theory could be proved too. So I let it drop.

Oh! those waves! and the long, long pathway of light from wave-tip to wave-tip, straight to the sun by day and the moon by night! — as there is a straight line which leads to any kind of light we see with any kind of eyes. "Straight and narrow" compared to the broad reaches of darkness in which one might wander if he chose.

I sat on deck and watched that stretch of glory until I felt the throb of the Largo, and saw at the farthest end the four and twenty elders in trailing robes, with their crowns still on, approaching the Presence. Of course, I only saw their backs.

We had some very pleasant and many plain passengers but only one disagreeable one. She was anything but plain. She had an

artistic nature and hoped to "drop little helpful words" as she said she always did. One of the people who "daub their souls over everything"— some Frenchman says. I hope Mrs. Roscoe will be spared such a trial.

She will get over safely, I am sure. And if not — if He holds the ocean in the hollow of His hand, it can't be so very bad, even at the bottom.

Do I believe in fore-ordination? Of course I do. It is my one comfort now — better than Kismet and Karma combined. Of course there are paradoxes. They are everywhere, and the higher the altitude of thought the more of them.

My friend, Edith Nolan, in the Rivington Street Settlement had a talk with an old Scotch woman in a tenement on Forsythe Street. After a longer call than she had meant to make, she said laughingly, watching for a chance to get away: "You believe in Election, don't you!"

There was no laughter in the earnest response:

"Yes, Miss, I do. If I did not believe I was elected I'd get straight down on me two knees and I'd niver stop praying till I was."

That is the kind of election I believe in, paradox and all. I heard Amy discussing the matter with Mr. Nelson out in the lawn chairs last evening when they were trying to plan for old drunken Pete's wife. Mr. Kennedy came later from Mrs. Bennet's and helped it on. They seemed to consider it a Christian doctrine, but he proved that it belonged to every religion. As he said these two paradoxical planks in all creeds are like the Pillars of Hercules — on two different continents of truth, one human and the other divine but they both rest on the same subterranean and submarine stratum of truth, out of our sight.

I wondered myself if Mr. Kennedy liked always finding Mr. Nelson and his parish troubles here.

Oh, not always, of course, but he came oftener while you were away. Amy enjoys his calls and encourages him to come.

He has an Indian servant with him. I presume the man sleeps outside his door every night as ours used to do. Abram's opinion of the "black heathen" is worth hearing — and his effort to teach him Bible truths, and convince him of the exact fulfilment of Daniel's prophecy is worth overhearing.

I wonder, if I were a horse would I hate blinders or check-reins more?

And why do the Egyptians and Syrians blind the oxen that draw their water and thresh their grain? The old Jews who were forbidden to muzzle the ox, that trod out the corn, may have hit upon blinding them as a matter of economy. Samson might know.

They could not snatch up mouthfuls if they could not see. One would think a blind creature would never wish to eat. Yet, I can imagine a blind ox taking a "sight of comfort" with his cud. A blind lion would be mighty helpless and lonely.

When we were children father took pity on an old blind horse that had been turned out to die by the wayside. He named him after Sidney Smith's "Calamity." It took refuge in our front yard for several days and father would not let us drive it out. At last mother was so out-done she had Pete put him back in our tiny pasture and John and Hal cut half a bushel of spikes off the lower part of the trunk of the old thorn trees in the corner so he would not keep running against them.

The Club had to meet often when you were gone. Cupid and I get on beautifully. He says he likes to talk and few people care to listen. When he gets his "stent" done,— I can't get him to say "stint,"— he often comes along even when there is no meeting.

Jupiter requires him to shoot just so many times a day and he has but a thousand arrows in all. That is the reason he has wings. He has to pick up every arrow he shoots off and keep them in repair. That's why there is so much sameness to love stories. He has to use the same arrow over and over and there can't be much variety.

I remember that the Indian Cupid is always represented as attended by a parrot — so they've noticed the sameness too.

It was rather a delicate question, but while we were on the subject I asked Cupid why he had never married, himself. He replied that he had never had time — and shoemakers sometimes went as bare as their children.

When I asked — had he never happened to prick himself with his arrows, he said, "Oh, yes. 'Ask Psyche!" But after eighty or ninety years they have practically little effect.

He has to be careful not to hit people who are too young. If he does it sort of vaccinates them and after that it won't "take," or they have only some kind of an — *oid.*

I could hear that he was working away all the time that he talked — "Putting new feathers on some arrows," he said.

"Dove feathers?" I asked.

"No, goose feathers," he replied, and sometimes, he has to hunt for them like the Egyptian Jews for straw, which takes time.

He used to save the feathers from his own wings when he moulted, but everybody that was hit pulled off the feather and began to write poetry with it — for which, in a way, he felt responsible.

"Don't they write just the same with the goose-quills?" I asked, and he said, "Yes, but it is not as likely to be printed and circulated and set everybody else on the *qui vive* to be shot and write poetry too." They soon tire and throw away the quills and he can use them again. Of course, the next man hit writes the same stuff over, but he can't help that.

I tried to write a poem myself once, but I did not tell him. I had to give it up. I could not get "lilt" in, any way I could twist it.

Then I tried a sort of prose poem to work in "strenuous" or "banal" but I could not do that. When a word is epidemic, that way, it looks affected to leave it out, so I did not try to finish it.

XII

GOOD morning. Amy has gone with Mr. Kennedy for a drive. I wonder Mr. Nelson did not think it necessary to chaperone them! It is not nice of me to say that, for he spent an hour reading to me yesterday while they were chatting in the library.

Mr. Kennedy is quieter than I fancied him, but, as Amy says, he is very entertaining and I have a long list of questions I mean to ask him about India. How Jack and I used to plan for our trip there! I always wanted to see mother's home in Madura, and our Grandmother's grave. When I was very little I meant to be a missionary and cried when I was put to bed and remembered that the heathen would probably all be converted before I was big enough to go. I went to ladies' missionary meetings with mother just to hear them tell how many were left, and when conversions were too frequent I came home in a very low "frame."

Jack used to hear from Mr. Kennedy now

and then, but when his ship was finally given up there was always a tatter of hope and no one wrote me the usual letters — how could they!

What a frightfully cruel thing Hope is. I mean to have a real talk with her in the Club sometime and see if I cannot understand her better.

We all had tea together. When the water was almost boiling, Mr. Kennedy remarked that it was in the first of three stages of boiling, as the Chinese say when the little bubbles rise to the surface which they call "fish-eyes." I was so struck at the queer comparison that I leaned forward to look at them, and then pretended that I had dropped my fan. Just nervously, I said, "That is an easy way to make eyes." I was so vexed at myself! It is the very first reference.

"The Chinese," he says, "credit tea with all sorts of powers, to strengthen the will among others and repair the eye-sight." Evidently he was nervous too!

I drank three cups to test its powers and then remembered poor, old, blinking Dr. Johnson and decided all to myself that the climate of China must combine with the tea to produce the effect.

Mr. Kennedy told us the pretty legend of the tea-plant — curious rather — you have not heard it? A Buddhist wished to give himself up to meditation for a certain period but constantly grew weary and fell asleep. When he woke, at last, he was so distressed that he cut off his two eyelids and "cast them from him" so that they might not offend again. When he had completed his vigil his eyes were quite restored, and from the lids which he had thrown away had grown the first tea plants — whose leaves should furnish a drink to help holy men when the temptation to sleep came upon them.

I made Amy find the passage about eyes which offend and have to be plucked out, and then that eye-for-eye and tooth-for-tooth place. It does not say one must take an eye for an eye — but that one must not take more. It would be so easy if a man knocked out one of your teeth to knock out three or four of his! We have to be limited to the exact number, which requires self-control and such deliberation that one would almost surely forgive the injury before he had inflicted the penalty.

Why is it that while all our laws are based on old Mosaic principles, Moses allowed for

forgiveness and we do not? Every minutest offence has its penalty all measured off even to "alienation of affection." That does amuse Cupid! By the way, the Bible does not say to turn the other eye also — only the cheek.

Now are you ready to write?

In winter there were deep caverns between the fences and the snow-drifts, which curved over like the front of the sleigh. As I remember, they were blue inside. We could play in them whenever the crust was hard so we would not slump in. We crossed the meadow to get to the best ones — the meadow that the brook ran through. There were great patches of ice in the winter and of yellow cowslips in the spring. I was quite proud that I could make the biggest cracks in the ice when I fell down — with the back of my head. It hurt temporarily but the glory of it was permanent.

My head was stronger than my neck. I was always sure of that after an incident that occurred two or three years after we went to Newton.

It was the dead of winter and there was only a tiny path in the snow, set up on edge

and if you stepped up upon the bank of snow beside it you sank almost out of sight. We never shovelled paths in those days, they just grew somehow from people going for the mail and for lamp chimneys.

Mr. Hinman was very rich and he had never spoken to me before. That day when I met him he called me "dearie" and patted my "pretty red cheeks" and before I could say Jack Robinson he took me by the two sides of my head and swung me around behind him so neither of us got into the snow.

I thought how kind he was to speak to me so, but I was sorry my neck was not stronger, it ached quite hard. For a long time I could not look side ways with my neck at all — only with my eyes. Years after I hated him.

Often and often I wish Alice or Margaret could have lived to talk these old times over with me. John went as a missionary to China and died, and Hal is so busy he only writes once or twice a year. He has been in England these twenty years — never married. Arthur and Amy can't remember back to the time of my real childhood and Amy won't let me remember about some things — the donation among others. But it certainly took place

and I remember as if it were last night, that father carried Alice home, asleep in his arms, while mother ran along beside and tried to keep her legs covered up with the shawl. Sleigh-bells were jingling as the late arrivals came — for the biggest fun was after the minister was gone home.

Mother used not to mind when I reminded her of old times but I did not think about them so much then. I used to threaten to write a book about "We Children and Our Parish" and even put down a list of things to remember. They are in my desk still, in the big blank-book pigeon-hole at the left. Sometime I'll get you to look for them, if Amy has not burned up desk and all — as I told her to do on one of my ugly days.

Did you ever stand in the middle of a cornfield early in July, or even in October when the corn was cut, and notice how the straight rows of corn form the spokes of a wheel? There are four perpendicular rows, and four diagonal ones, only they are perpendicular, too, and between each of these another that does not reach you but is quite plain in the distance — sixteen in all.

Wherever you move there is another wheel just like it and you feel like the eye in the Sicilian or Manx coat of arms, like a hub or an omphalos.

XIII

OH, my dear, my dear! I so hoped you would not come and I am so glad you are here!

Such a dreadful, foolish, stupid thing happened!

Are you sure Amy is gone? I would not have her guess for all the gold in Peru. No one must know, because it was only a mistake — a poor, foolish, masculine mistake!

Men are really more apt to lose their balance than we.

I was just getting to feel so comfortable and at home with the few people I am as yet willing to see, and this comes!

What? I'll tell you. But I must begin back.

I had been worrying about Amy after you went, not on account of anything she said but what she had not said. Such a long silence made me fear they were depending upon an understanding. It is well enough for the man but a woman has no right to understand until

it is said. I do not see how Corinne ever had patience with her shilly-shallying Oswald. Such women spoil men and then write books to spoil women — to suggest to them that they can "understand" other men, on equally imaginary evidence.

Then poor Mr. Nelson, who is blinder than — I am, came one day and asked me a question I need not repeat. It seems he had hopes — evidently, he was *mis*-understanding. In spite of my assurance of goodwill, when I shook hands with him he said:

"You are sorry for me, I fear?"

"Oh, no!" I said, "I'd not be so unkind as to be sorry for anyone." I am sure he did not say anything to Amy for she seemed as care-free as ever, happier, if possible.

The most she said was the night Mr. Kennedy returned after his long visit in New York. At bed-time she asked:

"*Isn't* it nice to see Mr. Kennedy back, Oudene?"

Bless her dear heart! She never meant to say that and having let the word slip, she threw herself into my arms and sobbed as she had not before.

Poor child! Her nerves get quite unstrung. Mr. Nelson has let her do too much

parish work. Mr. Kennedy says he is "going to speak to Nelson" about that.

But I have not told you. Last night, while I sat by the window — inside, for it was cold — Mr. Kennedy came in unannounced, sat down in the stiff chair by me, and "offered himself" as they say — to *me!*"

I do not even know that Amy does not know.

My only thought was of her, and I could not let him suspect that. I cannot detect the least difference in her. Her voice sounds as gay as ever, and she put the same little funny turns into her morning directions to Abram when she could not have known that I heard.

I am glad that I cannot look into her face. It seems the cruelest treachery, when another has anything to hide, to detect it by a glance, however involuntarily.

There was not one throb in my heart of disloyalty to her, and only a feeling of pity for him that he should have fancied me so in need of him that it would be worth while for him to make the effort — and that things were tangled for Amy, even temporarily.

I have heard the phrase "offered himself" when I imagined an anaconda offering it-

self to a kid, promising to be true "till death do us part"—or unite.

Mr. Kennedy would give himself in a way and sense that any woman would be proud of. With his strength and truth and loyalty she would never miss the love if it were absent.

How we deceive ourselves! He had been quite honest in his—wooing, could you call it? And yet, I knew the shade of relief in his voice when he tried to insist.

"Wisdom at one entrance is quite shut out," as Milton says, "but there is a higher wisdom than that of sight. I was a seer, though blind." I'm sure he knows it and thanks God already. It was only a tangle, there is not a broken thread, if only we do not break one getting the tangle out.

Now we must write—though I have a lot of Club nonsense to tell you. We had a kimono meeting this morning just before sunrise. We do not care much about each other's costumes. I suggested a trip to the North Cape on some house-boat or in a balloon, not for the scenery but a change of air.

Cupid went into one of his pets at that.

"No one remembers," said he, "that my

wings are not very warm, and that I've nothing to wear but my bandage."

He does not go into the latitudes any higher than he can help, and tries to get over his northern territory in the summer months as much as possible. He starts north in May or June and goes back in October. He was surprised that we'd not noticed it, since the poets have harped on it *ad nauseam*.

Once in a while he makes a rush into the north at Christmas time or when there is a ball or concert or house-party to warm things up a bit.

He never attempted a sleigh-ride but once, when he was hidden among the furs, and that was a failure. The young man held the chaperone's hand all the way by mistake. Since that his Summer work has to last through the Winter.

"If they are not satisfied let them come south, where I am," he concluded, and many of them do. It is really a good thing for them, and also for the tropic-ites, who used to get too much of his attention.

Finally we went down into Egypt. There he and Homer began a conversation which grew into a discussion and ended in a dispute. Homer quoted something from his

works, as any poet is likely to do. It nettled Cupid, though he is as likely to think well of himself as any of us, and he "humphed" and said he "would a great sight"—as if he had sight to wager!—"a great sight rather have people write poetry about him than to write, himself, about other people." He fairly puffed up, and said he "considered it a satisfactory compensation for all his labours and exposure that most of the poetry of the world had been written in his honour *and half the prose.* He stuck that on to be more aggravating though he knew it was not true.

Homer did not argue with him, though he came nearer to a sneer than I supposed he could when he said it might be true, but that it showed bad taste, and he never set such a fashion. He wrote about adventures and wars and *wrath.* Cupid nudged me, and asked if he remembered a lady named Chryseis or Briseis, and a girl called Helen?

Homer never answered — just went off in a huff — and Cupid rolled over and laughed till we had to snatch him from falling into the water or getting under the oxen's hoofs — the blinded ones that were turning the water wheels. How I'd love to hear one creak!

I haven't finished about that meeting yet — I came near calling it a séance, seeing that some of us were ghosts, but a séance would be stupid for me.

Cupid does not seem to be afraid of anyone. Anchises was there, and being as he is a kind of an uncle of Cupid's, he attempted to reprove him for being so disrespectful to Homer. He began by telling him what a good boy his brother Aeneas had always been. He asked him to compare Aeneas' pious treatment of himself and Cupid's treatment of his mother — whom he was "always getting into trouble."

Cupid got the best of it, for he asked where his precious Aeneas would have been if he had not.

Cupid gets so tired of having Aeneas "thrown up to him!" He asked Venus once how many sons like Aeneas, she and Anchises, or anyone else, had expected to have.

To change the subject, I asked Anchises where Venus was the night of the fire in Troy — why she did not pay more attention to her family. He replied very cheerfully, though it was evidently an effort that it happened just when she was expecting Adonis up from — where is it he spends his winters? — so she

was engaged. Besides, she and Creusa were not any too good friends.

I am ashamed of myself, frittering away all this time! Between nonsense and gossip I forget what I started out to do. Then there is the reading!

It was a strange conceit of the Old Egyptians that men have two pairs of eyes, and that it is "requisite that the pair which are beneath be closed, when the pair that are above perceive, and that when the pair that are above are closed, those beneath should be opened."

I wish they had told us the functions of the different pairs, and from which they received greater good.

I wonder if I have an undiscovered pair beneath, which are, or may be opened? Are they the ones with which I still see all that I have seen? For I lose faith in Oblivion as time goes on and these absolutely stupid and inane memories come creeping back into the light, from their dark corners. Fancy! I remembered the other day that I used to gather up the rinds from the plates after we had bacon or fried pork, and hide them behind the front doorstep where there was a crack

barely big enough for my hand, whence I got them when the spirit prompted, for maxillary exercise!

How old could I have been? I shiver with the fear that I may remember other things equally distressing. Let's change the subject.

XIV

GOOD morning, Miss Ames. The weeks have seemed very long without you, but I am glad you went — more glad that your sister is recovered, partially at least.

Nothing has happened since you went away. Our little trouble is quite forgotten.

We are so happy! Sometimes I feel as if I had crept into a cask when I took that ether and gone over my Niagara and been bumping about in the whirlpool ever since, but am now happily released. Mr. Kennedy's mistake was the shock that threw me up on the bank, and now I am escaped and find my eyes wide open — my other eyes.

We all understand each other and I hardly remember that I am deprived of the most important antennæ with which one usually feels his way. Amy talks to me again, as she used, about Mr. Kennedy — who has to go over to Berlin on business next week — and I was never so thankful for her solid sense as now. Mr. Nelson has recovered his equilibrium and

enters into all their happiness. Really, myself, I am half persuaded that it is a question whether celibacy be not a good thing for a clergyman. It gives him far more hold on the young people, especially the young ladies who need to be steadied now and then.

Mr. Kennedy, when time hangs heavy on his hands, reads to me and takes me to India and frolics all over my mythology with me whenever I please. He helps Amy with her church work and says he is a candidate for vestry-man! I told him last night that while he was away, I feared, I should back-slide and forget my various religions. When I asked how long he was to be gone, he replied that it "all depended." I was sorry on the instant for my question implied that he almost belonged here — which he does not at all.

No, I am not more tired than usual. Did you ever wonder why the ostrich egg should be hung in churches and used as an ornament and as a symbol of faith? I asked Faith one day and she said it was because the ostrich hatched its eggs by faith — merely gazing upon them, to see her faith accomplished. I demurred on the ground that that was rather

a sign of hope, but she resented the suggestion almost vehemently.

Sometimes I think she seems to look down upon Hope, but a sister could not do that. Hope certainly admires *her,* and I cannot think she would usurp any of her prerogatives.

Hope is one of those pliant yielding creatures who "give" at the least pressure, and yet are as stubborn as the everlasting hills. You may meet and confute any argument she presents, and she may admit herself out-done, but there she will be the next hour smiling at you and as firmly ensconced as ever in her corner.

XV

OH! I must tell you! I had a brilliant idea to-day. I suppose it was thinking about that Picciola story, and the prisoner in the dark dungeon who had a pin which he used to throw away and then hunt for.

I asked Amy if I might have a pan of pease and one bean. She sent Abram for them and then came to see what I was going to use them for. I mixed the bean in with the pease and then set to work to find it again. I was happy and excited for an hour to think that I had real work I could do at last.

I found the bean one and a half times, and would have finished if Mrs. Andrus had not come to call.

XVI

SUNDAY again, and I was afraid you might be detained. Mrs. Arnold sent for Amy half an hour ago and I was just getting tired of myself and wondering if it would be right for me to get my pease to-day.

The day has been so beautiful! Amy says that the sermon was more helpful than usual, although she is quite extravagant about admiring Mr. Nelson's sermons. I suspect sometimes that she hopes that I will be willing to go and hear them. I never detected any effort to give me a hit through their instrumentality — only a desire to get me to go out.

This morning made me think of Nydia.

She came along just after the bells were through tolling, and wanted me to go for a walk. We were in Pompeii, she said, and she knew every rut in the stones, and whose doorstep I was stumbling on every few steps. She told me histories of all the people whose holes they found in the ashes — whose negatives they have in the museums.

After a time we strolled away from the entrance to the modern ruins — that sounds queer! — turned to the left and followed the road Jack and I drove over once, to the old amphitheatre. We climbed the little hill to the left and sat down with our backs to the smoking demon, as she called it, between us and Naples.

Our faces were turned to the south, where we knew, across the valley, lay the long line of hills with the blue dado of mist stretched along their feet.

Nydia remembered it all, better than I, of course. She was there when it was crowded with half-clad or long robed men. It was the only place where she had ever been grateful for her blindness. Many girls of her age had fainted, those dreadful days and been carried away in their palanquins.

After a time we forgot that it was all a ruin, and she told me a strange story, sitting there in the sunshine.

When she was a child, too small to be kept strictly in the women's quarters, a man came to see her father one day, a soldier. She had shown me her father's little reception room by the outer door as we went over her old home.

The soldier seemed old to her then, but he was probably not long past military age. He had served in many lands but his first service had been in the new province of Judea.

Curiously enough, he was sent back there for a year just before he was mustered out and had helped in the siege and destruction of Jerusalem — he called it some other name. Seeing the little blind child made him remember that during his first years there, some very strange incidents had occurred. There had been a young fellow about who worked very wonderful cures. He had himself been present when he restored sight to a man, who had been born blind.

There was some dispute about it and a kind of investigation.

His father and mother would not vouch for it at all, though they stuck to it that he was their son and that he had really been born blind. Very naturally, they did not want to be humbugged any more than the rest.

He — the soldier — meant to go and talk to the man who did it but there were games or drills or something else, always, to prevent, and the man was only in Jerusalem off and on.

We talked a long time of how it would

seem to have someone happen along who should do that for us!

She says she never talked with Bartimæus — or even heard his name. It is just a matter of accident, meeting in our Club. You see, we can't very well hunt each other out.

After she went it was a bit lonely.

When I feel quite deserted I repeat Jack's favourite sentence from Xenophon. "There is no speed with which one can out-run the gods, no inaccessible height to which one can flee from them, no darkness in which he can hide from their eyes."

It is such a comfort on a fast train or up a giddy elevator! And here in my Outer Darkness! Sometimes I am almost afraid He can't see me, any more than I can see Him — but then, I know better.

"Though one make his bed in hell," he is not banished the Presence. Hell can't be very bad, if He is there. Old Xenophon's threat is my one comfort.

"Hades" they tell me, means either "not seeing" or "not seen." I hope it is the first. I must think about it.

"Even there shall thine eye see me"— doesn't it say?

We miss Mr. Kennedy dolefully — especially Mr. Nelson. Theirs is quite a rare friendship, although Mr. Kennedy is so much older, or *because* he is so much older.

Mr. Nelson has a letter from him. He had a comfortable passage — had not gone on to Berlin but was to leave Paris that night. He had met Mrs. Emerald Sutton — Helen Richards that was, you remember — whose husband is ordered to the Philippines. She was so surprised to hear about me, and "believed she would run over for six months or so." She was with her husband in Honolulu last winter, but says she draws the line at the Line. The Hathorns are her cousins and always delighted to see her. She is very entertaining.

Miss Wilson stayed an hour yesterday.

I wish people would not ask me if I have read this or that. If I have I tell them without being questioned. I probably have not.

They began writing books so long before I was born that I have not caught up. Now I never shall.

I got a bad start too. I really never did read books properly. Father said "Yes" when I asked if I might have for my very own any books in his library which I would read

through. I thought about it very seriously. There was the big dictionary. I knew that if I did not begin with that and be done with it, I should be dreading it all the time and get no good out of anything. So I did, but never even finished the preface. I really think that that attempt and failure was a calamity. It might not have been if I had not persisted in feeling guilty about it — but I did.

That set me off wrong, and I seem always to have been reading the things I should not, and leaving unread the things I should have read — till there is no sense in me, only odds and ends and multiplying stores which I could not use or assimilate.

I liked almanacs and scrap-books and notes to big books that no one reads the body to. Every interesting thing is in notes and their charm grows and grows after the book is out of date.

How should I have known what colour the King of Troy wore on Mondays, or on Tuesdays or any other day, but for the footnotes; or who was Admetus' hired man; or about the wooden Jupiter in Crete who had no ears — like Baal, I presume; or how somebody or other told a sculptor that he was wise to cover his Venus with jewels and "make her rich

since it was not in his power to make her beautiful? Heaps of things one never learns, but from notes.

Yes, I am quite concerned about Amy. I suppose I may speak to you about it — if she did.

She came into my room last night and sat down between me and the window. I like to know what she is looking at, and she said, "The clouds."

There seemed to be no wind, but they were chasing across the moon quite madly. I asked if they had the same faint rainbow edges, when they caught the fullest light and she said "Yes." I could see them myself after that.

I suspected that she had something on her mind and had that sort of Damocles feeling I used to have when Bert Moore held me up in the air on our old teeter-board and threatened to jump off. I never screamed, though.

Amy sat still a long time, moving over so she could poor my hand. That is a strange word — as if a caress had pity in it, as a matter of course, like the Hawaiian "Aloha."

Then she played with my hair, and said foolish things about it, and counted the "seven

points of beauty," of which two are wholly imaginary.

I suspected from the first that she was thinking about — wished to speak about Mr. Kennedy and did not quite like to begin. So I began — asking if she had not heard from him — and gave her a sort of start.

After that there was no doubt in my mind about her feeling. She appreciates him too, I think. Mr. Nelson has spoken of that.

When she was once off she said a good deal, more than she meant to, perhaps, about his fine mind, his delicacy of taste, his high ideals, his fund of information and experience. The phrases sounded very familiar.

Then she started on a more tractable subject, his fine looks and distinguished bearing, half oriental from his long residence in India.

I was thinking more of her than of him, and good looks are not of so great importance now — in my eyes.

You would laugh to know how near I came to being — I do not like to say jealous, unless you will remember that there are varieties of jealousy, and infinitesimal degrees of it. I do not suppose a woman ever loses her special feeling towards a man whom she respects, and

who has once thought he cared for her, even temporarily.

I chose Jack deliberately because I loved him. I did not prefer him to anyone else, for never before Jack's time nor after did anyone offer me a choice. I could not say that I loved him better than any other. That would imply that I loved two. I only loved him, and chose him as truly as if I had had all others to choose from.

Twice in my life I have dreamed about Mr. Kennedy. It is strange that I should remember the exact number.

Once, it was just after Jack and I were engaged. What queer things these involuntary muscles in our minds are! And again, last year, just after —

I told Jack the first dream, and when I awoke from the second I was telling it to him, also. I remember the dream only because Jack's face was beaming so as he listened.

I thank God so often for my dreams; especially now when I see in them. Few people, I am sure, have such blessed ones. I suppose I am getting toward the time of life when one sees visions instead of dreaming mere common dreams.

Jack seems to talk to me like some far away

brother, whose face I usually see only as in a dull mirror. Of course I only see the vision, not him; and the things I tell him are like messages I send.

Indeed, I do send messages to him, when I am *not* asleep. God has myriads — lacs of messengers. When I ask him to send just one of them to say just a few words for me I certainly know that he will do it. I have always and always sent messages to our little one.

XVII

I AM afraid I must talk Club, this morning, my dear. We had such fun last night!

First, I had a quiet talk with Cupid. He says he used to have eyes. He was not born blind like a puppy.

I told him that somebody — I could not think who at the time — had written somewhere about someone's finding a "nestful of little squab Cupids." Neither of us knew whether squabs were blind. Nydia had come along by that time.

Cupid took our joking better than he does sometimes. He seems to like Nydia. She never knew before that he wore a bandage, and could not understand. It seems that he supposed we all wore them. He and Justice had often spoken of it, he said.

Someone suggested that if he should get rid of his bandage and were not too fat, he might be able to see. Hope recommended a stricter diet. I think he was more inclined to resent that than to be cross about the squabs.

I believe his blindness is a relief to Venus.

She would not like to be spied upon by her own son. She's not that kind.

Justice hinted that "some thought" he might not have been blind at all if Venus had not kept his eyes done up so long. No investigation was ever made. Indeed, there was no society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children when Cupid was a — squab. (I suppose Raphael will be charged with painting little squab cherubims next.)

Later in the evening Cupid had occasion to resent Samson's calling him a *Lustkind* — though it was not a name of the strong man's own invention. The "lust of the eyes" Cupid does not hold himself responsible for; he thinks the Cupids and Phaetons and Buddhas in eyes were pure fiction. I told him they were really there visible to the naked eye.

"Why do people go about with their eyes naked?" he snapped. He did not mean it. He was just a bit snappy. Then on he went about clothes in general. Several of us had spoken of the heat.

"Why don't they all wear bandages on their eyes?" he asked, "and there'd be no need of clothes?"

I urged that they could not work then and support themselves and us.

"They would not need to work, if they did not have to buy clothes," he urged — forgetting, I suppose, our climate.

There is something in his idea. The animal's eyes are "holden"— which is the same as bandaged — and they do not have to wear whole suits of clothes to cover up all they are not pleased to consider *face*. They're warm enough — at least they do not often freeze to death.

Homer was late.

We have all been careful not to let him know that any question had been raised as to his identity, so I was surprised and sorry to discover from a conversation which I overheard between him and Milton that it had leaked out. I do not think that Milton has any professional jealousy, or that he would have twitted him of his doubtful honours if he had.

Homer may have been indignant at first,— I did not hear the beginning of the conversation,— but he had gotten over that when I joined them.

He thought it remarkable, after he had been born in seven different cities to make sure of existence, that he should be reduced to thin air now.

"Other old writers multiply," he argued. "There was Moses, and there was Isaiah, there were half a dozen apiece to them, and Lord Bacon was a whole syndicate. He did not care to go to the other extreme and evaporate altogether."

There is a good deal to be said as to the advantages and disadvantages of double and fractional identity.

When Homer was pushed he inclined to the opinion that he would rather share his own credit with someone else than have his reputation increased by a lot of things he had never done.

I forgot to tell him, as I meant to do, of the retort that one of his best friends made to a learned scholar who was criticising his Iliad. He told him to go on and say his worst, he could not do him any harm "unless he should translate him."

Homer will enjoy that. He says, honestly, that some of his old friends deliberately destroyed their works, preferring oblivion to translation — secular translation, of course. He "was not so thin-skinned," and thinks he has had enough fun watching the trouble he has made, and the antics of his apologists to counterbalance the annoyance.

He has, or pretends to have, great sympathy for English translators, especially since I showed him our new Dictionary. I told him most of the words were foreign or colloquial or provincial, vulgar or obsolete, or upstarts and variants, but we had to let the tares grow in our wheat or some other dictionary would get the most words. We do not actually put in every last one as it is, I said; bowman was left out and satsuma and Apollinaris and perdy —

"In Greece," he said, "we never had any words that could not be used in poetry. That put poetry within every man's reach."

"Or we either!" I interrupted. "You have not read our poets I must remind you. Poetry is within any man's reach here, too."

I asked Milton and Ossian if they thought it would pay to get out an English dictionary of words that would bear a civil service test. It struck them favourably, providing some Hugo or Davis would get out a handbook that tramps and gamins and dialecticians could use. That would be easier for them to carry.

XVIII

DIDN'T we get *any* reminiscences in yesterday? I don't know that it is my fault any more than it is yours. You are as apt to lead me on as I to take the bit in my teeth and run away!

A letter from Helen Richards — Sutton — came this noon, and she says "Mr. Kennedy went to Madrid yesterday." We supposed he was going to Berlin or was in Dresden! She is trying to get passage but the boats are all crowded. She finds a vacancy on the "Attic" but they are looking for something earlier at Cook's. I do not know that I am so much in haste to see her. Now let's write.

I cannot remember when I did not worry more or less about money — especially when our lamp-chimneys broke. Once I had quite a lot of money saved — a whole roll of bills, one cent and two cent bills as they had then, and threes and fives, beside my gold dollar which mother kept. I tried to save enough to pay "the debts" — which I overheard about.

I begged the money of mother, mostly, for

fear she would spend it all. One great copper cent I had found frozen into the sidewalk. Mr. Joyce came along just as I was beginning to cry because I could not get it out. My fingers were numb with the digging. He told me to run into the house and get a dipper of hot water to pour on it. He promised to watch while I was gone so no one else would get it and when I came back he was going to give me another "to go with it" but could not find any in his pockets.

Oh! yes. I remember the war. While I was dressing one morning mother asked me if I wanted father to go and be a soldier — and I wondered what was a Chaplain that he was so determined not to be.

I remember the effect of the war upon our salary and way of living. One of the economic devices, I did not suspect at the time. When the butter was churned Jennie always made three little pats for Alice and John and me, and we ran races to see whose would last longest.

Is that Amy calling you?

"Blind regrets"— of all stupid things! I know my beloved Curtis wrote it, but it was a careless *lapsusque*.

My regrets, like love, are "not blind, but eagle-eyed." They have eyes like sea-urchins' spines — jointed like snails, and they can turn like Ezekiel's wheels.

Amy read a sentence this morning: "Happiness in this world is like a flash of lightning from the clouds."

"What must it be beyond," she interpolated hastily, "where the glory is perpetual!"

How much, I have thought since, one can see by a single flash of lightning! We can reckon it up by the result of an instantaneous "exposure." A whole mountain side with its bristling firs, a whole city, a lawn with its border of beeches is printed forever in one mere fraction of a second, and an eye sees it all, as quickly.

Why do we speak as if happiness could be obtained or attained — as if we all had a right to it — all but the hindmost. The idea is certainly un-Constitutional. We have only a right to the pursuit of happiness. Sometimes I think old Tom Jefferson condensed all irony in that word "pursuit" and watched to see if the baby nation would swallow it — as Helen Wheeler watched to see if the Grand Army men would publish her poem about

hanging George Washington on a sour apple tree if he'd lived in another century.

It implies such utterly hopeless hope! and it was so unnecessary to put that clause in — just a drop of French sarcasm that gives to the whole instrument a touch of uncanny Mephistophilian ingenuity.

The worst of it is it is so true! We seem, all of us, to prefer, vastly, to stay in this world and pursue happiness, than to go to another and realise it. Buddhists and Brahmans extend the pursuit indefinitely and I suppose Dives thought that a preferable way to do.

It probably is not the happiness we shun in the future so much as the door that leads to it. The old Incas sang that Death was "a dyke thrown up to prevent desertion." If it were not for that the hunter's zeal might lead us to leap through the gate as willingly as a cherry-petal falls in Nikko. The Japanese all wonder, I am told, that we prefer our roses, which rather rot on the stems than fall in seemly fashion.

Old Amos Barton's wife told me once that she heard I was "not so rattle-headed as I used to be." It was quite a compliment then, but Helen writes "I hope Oudene is as rattle-

headed as ever"— In some ways I'm more so!

Now I'm ready. *Fritz, zu,* as Carlyle says.

I used to worry dreadfully about my own looks and never forgot the slightest remark I heard about them. In those days it was a religious maxim that a child must not be praised "before his face." I heard many nice things about the others.

John was "a fine looking little chap," Alice a "perfect beauty," Margaret "looked like her father for all the world," Hal was "too cunning for anything"; but I seem to have been all misfits.

Mrs. Carson, a delegate we entertained once, said she could not tell what colour my hair was —"It wasn't brown, nor it wasn't red exactly." Mr. Robberts at the store said my feet were bigger than my hands. Miss Ellis asked mother if she wasn't afraid my hair would grow down to my eyebrows.—"It makes her look as if she didn't know as much as she did," she ended lugubriously.

"Minnie Atkin's brow goes almost up to her hair-ribbon," she said another time, "and she had the most head-marks last term of anybody in her class." Poor mother looked so distressed! "Over in Shoreham," she added

to cheer us up, "Mrs. Wilcox shaves off a strip of her hair to raise her brow."

I watched father shave after that — he wore Burnsides or sideburns, I never could tell them apart — and every night in bed I pulled out a few hairs, though no one noted the improvement.

They say Bill Sillman is dead. I never knew him and I did not want to. I could never forgive him for something his father did when I was about five — it must have been: — I know the Common Fence was painted green still.

And I remember he was at the donation. I must tell you about that before I forget.

Squire Hoyt got up and gave out notice in church — Father said he wouldn't. I heard him tell mother he wouldn't. It was to be "two weeks from next Wednesday night." Contributions of money could be given to *him* any time and wood or hay might be drawn when convenient. Vegetables and groceries and clothing were to be taken to the Residence and cooked food and provisions for the supper must be at the tavern the afternoon before. The oyster supper would be served at ten o'clock and from that on. A full attendance was desired, and he hoped the needs

of the minister's family would be generously remembered.

We were up in our front pew and I remember mother's cringing, and folding under the edge of her cloak, and tucking her magenta Sontag out of sight. Father cast a sheep's eye at us all and then looked at his own legs. Was he counting us — I wondered.

Then came the arrivals, and what fun! There were loads and loads of wood, "four-foot" and "chunks" and kindling size. Old Pete had many a weeks' chopping to do on it. Three big loads of hay came and Mr. Hinman sent Will down with a wheel-barrow full. We had corn for the chickens and corn on ears for Minnie — our pig — and oats and buckwheat. Mr. Palmer brought a whole cheese, but it turned out that half of it was to go on the salary — the half we had to give away too.

Mrs. Hingham had a little millinery parlour in the room next to where she kept the Post Office. She made me a bonnet which, as I remember it, was a creation. No such gears grow of themselves. It was a mountain of fluffy white silk with flowers and feathers and bows edged with lace, which made her

famous. From far and near came ambitious mothers to get the like, while mother only let me wear mine once or twice for fear I should soil it.

Alice had a plush coat, cut down from Julia Gate's, and Margaret a dress, and John a pair of mittens with a string to put over his neck so he would not lose them. He did, though, and Mrs. Walker, who knit them, missed them and asked mother what he had done with them. I caught her saying they were "laid away" as if they were dead. And next week she told her they were really lost she was afraid, but he had some old ones.

The hotel had an enormous great ballroom stretching over the barroom and hall and parlour; behind, over the kitchen and pantry and bread-room and dining-room and even over the wood-shed, in case of emergency, were the bedrooms. There were crowds upon crowds there and more kept coming from all the towns about. It was a bright moonlight night, of course. Some sleighs had sleds tied on behind for beaux and sweethearts who were especially audacious. One sled came empty, and great were the surmises as to the whereabouts of the pair for whom it was meant. When they finally arrived

they announced that they had been married by old doting Elder White, on the way. Sure enough, it was true, and they lived happily ever after, so far as I have learned.

XIX

AMY asked me last night which I thought was more important, the Urim or Thummim, Light or Truth. I have not quite decided.

St. Paul does not often come to the Club or I could find out a lot about those Old Testament things that he got from Gamaliel. He was blind so short a time that he does not know, himself, whether he really belongs. We always welcome him as cordially as if he were a sure-enough "worthy."

He agrees with me that too much light may be more disastrous, physically, than none at all.

I did not mention to him that Semele had found it so too — though Ovid says it was the sound, rather than the effulgence, that affected her — and she can't remember.

St. Paul says no one can think what those days were to him — supposing that his sight was gone forever.

He was most of the time, however, so over-

whelmed by the spiritual light that shone within that he did not even perceive the physical darkness. The Vision he had seen was glorious and so permanent that he did not realise it had passed and was only a memory.

We all see colour-pictures, when we take time for them, on the linings of our eyelids after we have gazed at the flame of a common lamp. His were probably as much more brilliant and significant as the vision he saw was more brilliant and significant than a lamp flame — and we do not know the optical properties of those scales.

I must inquire what he did with them. I do not remember to have seen them in any reliquary. They would have a commercial value now. Those Johnston folks might get one and raffle it off for the benefit of their church. They have tried every other way to raise funds for it. If they don't hit on something new before long they will have to give money outright themselves.

I was going to tell you, when we were interrupted, about one of our spring chickens that stole her nest one October and hatched out a whole brood of little chickens — five, I think — just like an old hen. Our father

was very easily moved by instances of special maternal assiduity and fidelity. He decided at once that they "were worth raising," and began to think how it might be accomplished. Mother was inclined to resent the impertinence of "a pullet like that!"

When she discovered father down cellar, arranging a nursery for her with some of his book boxes, she was downright rebellious. For several days they had to stay out in the hen house, but as usual she yielded at last.

Later father wanted to put her into a warmer apartment under the family sitting-room, and mother vetoed the proposal most vehemently.

"Very well," he replied with alarming meekness, "I was going to put the other hens in too. The ground is frozen so hard their bills are all split open from pecking on it."

At that she withdrew all her objections and wanted to set up a little stove for them which was not in use.

I ran out to help him catch them and felt so dreadfully that he whispered to me that their "bills were always split open or how could they eat?"

We could not keep them down cellar very long for something got in and scared them

and they made a dreadful noise when we were having an Enquiry Meeting upstairs.

What was I going to tell you next? Do you ever think of a thing till you forget it? Sometimes I feel that I am going to forget what I am thinking about, and although I clutch at it and think I shall not let it slip away — it vanishes in spite of all I can do.

One of my greatest trials was to stand still when mother had to sew me up somewhere. She seemed quite indifferent to the pricks that resulted when I did *not* stand still. She almost invariably remarked that a stitch in time saved nine, but she never said nine *what*.

But these were not what I meant to tell. I fear I cannot think any more to-night.

XX

YES, "Mrs. Sutton" came last night. I fear I can only remember to call her Helen. Sit down directly, dear, and let me tell you I am so relieved — but more surprised than I expected to be.

She rushed down as soon as she had lunched and came hunting for me on the porch without ringing the bell. Did you think anyone would be so bold? When she found me she threw herself on my neck and laughed and cried too. Before I could catch my breath she said, "And so Amy's engaged!"

"Who told you?" I asked.

"Who?" she repeated, "Mr. Kennedy, of course."

"They never have confessed to me," I said, supposing that she would be abashed at finding she had let the cat out the bag.

"Never mind if they haven't," she laughed, "I have. I knew you would be perfectly delighted and they were silly not to know it

too. They did. I said to Mr. Kennedy, 'Why, Oudene is the last person in this living world who would want Amy to sacrifice herself for her.'"

"And what did he say?" I inquired.

"Oh," she replied, "he said that was the very idea he had about it, but he could not well insist."

She had had a glorious passage. She always has. She does not dance and flirt herself, but she keeps watch of those who do. "The Atlantic is not wide enough for real tragic affairs to mature," she says. "On the Pacific there is time for all sorts of things to happen, and for the fiancées to change their minds two or three times before they meet the fiancés.

"The Alstrongs and Wheelers were coming back after two years of circumnavigation" and "told her about the Toms and Dicks and Harrys they met on the Manchuria going out" and "they introduced her and she introduced them and"—Helen always does have such a good time! She deserves to be popular for she is true blue, a frantic advocate when her friends get into trouble and generous and sympathetic to a fault.

I am glad she has come, but I longed to be

alone and think. I knew I was glad of what she had told me but I did not know how glad until she had gone. That is Helen's rarest gift — she always seems to know when you want to think — and be alone. She had letters to write a little after nine, and was gone.

Amy was down at Mrs. Murphy's, cutting out some work for the sewing class, I supposed, which was quite a mistake. "I took her for a walk," Mr. Nelson explained. "We had some plans to make and she had not been out to see the flowers at Mr. Draper's.

"Oh! Oudene!" she groaned, "they *are* so lovely!"

She did not know Helen had come and I did not tell her.

When we were alone she sat by me and perhaps I made it easy for her to speak about my loneliness — hoping she would tell me.

It was a hot dark night, you remember, and the heavy wind swept the vines against me.

She thought I was "slow"— when I asked —"in adjusting myself to new conditions." "My friends miss me, need me, why will I shut myself away from them so?"

"Why, Amy!" I interrupted, "I have seen so many persons! Mr. Nelson and Mr. Kennedy and all your poor people — even

Mrs. Hammond you remember, and Mrs. Bennet!"

"But it is a whole year!" she said — and when I was ready she helped me upstairs very tenderly.

She came into my room, long after I was in bed and picked up some scattered things — then she came and kneeled by me. We both prayed, I fancy. She has been quiet, for her, ever since Mr. Kennedy went away — and yet I have noticed a suppressed happiness which she seemed sometimes to smother too closely.

"Are you tired to-night, dear?" I said. "Where did you go to-day?"

"First to Mrs. Anderson's," she replied, "her husband's head is worse; and then to see Mary Jane's wedding gown. Just as I was leaving, Mr. Nelson brought Charles in to give them a bit of drill for the service. It was so funny! Mary was afraid to stand up for fear they would be married accidentally —" and this Friday, Mum!"

"I doubt if Charles will get courage to take her hand in his with the crowd looking on. We told him he positively must and that seemed to relieve him. He is honest and true as the day is long — or the night either.

Mary will have a good, faithful, motherly husband, tender, too, in his way. I am glad for her!"

After a moment, I faltered; "I wish, dear, I might be happy for you in that same way —"

She stroked my forehead a moment, then leaned over and kissed it, whispering, almost:

"I think, Oudene, you will be when you know."

I lay quite still.

"We have not known, dear, how you would feel. I did not know but Mr. Kennedy had told you. I asked him to if he was sure you would be glad. He answered, 'What if I am sure she will be sorry?' 'Then she shall never know,' said I, 'there shall be nothing to tell.'"

Mr. Nelson was sure you would be happy, relieved, I don't know what not, to know I was so happy. "You would have one more to love you — entertain you"— not dreaming how that last word hurt!

I told her how glad and happy I was for her and that I had foreseen it, I hoped, and longed for it to be true. I was not satisfied with the way I expressed it, but I am sure she knows. That one word had made me think about myself so foolishly!

I did not sleep for hours. I worked over a bit of mathematics to prove very foolishly that Heaven is deaf and dumb.

Delaroche wrote of the "dumb hostility of heaven" and an equally competent authority says that "heaven is deaf, but not blind."

It sees our wickedness but cannot hear our apologies. I suppose it does just that, so long as we are in a mood to apologise. Real repentance and penitence are always a pantomime — to be seen and not heard.

"Don't talk"— father used to say when anything went wrong — and we didn't. But it was never hard to make him understand we were sorry.

There is Helen's voice now.

XXI

MY dear! — I am so glad the rain did not keep you. I need you all the more but I do hope you will not come when you should not.

Let's have some Club to liven things up before we begin.

We met in Athens last night and sat on the Hill of the Muses, too late for the sunset if we could have seen it. I saw it from there years ago and the great fiery ball dropped into the Acropolis as into its socket.

Cupid was sitting on the slope toward the Stadium, at first, and it seems Faith began, while I was talking with Zedekiah, to belabour him for causing so much misery in the world. She did seem to be charging him with more than his share of the troubles, and I was minded, almost, to take his part.

He bore it all so meekly that I was frightened. He admitted everything she said and even added that he had been worrying about it himself and wondering what he ought to do.

The trouble was he seemed to do as much harm by not shooting as when he shot.

Sometimes when he tries his best to aim at somebody he thinks ought to be hit, a gust of wind comes along and sends his arrow down an alley or around a corner. One young fellow whom he was trying to "help out" once asked him if he had his quiver full of boomerangs.

Cupid is as patient a little fellow as ever lived, and seemed willing to listen to almost any amount of unpleasant truth about himself — if it wasn't *too* true. I think Faith pushed the subject a little too far myself, and he finally retorted that she did as much mischief as he did.

I do not think he believed it himself when he first said it, but after he got warmed up he made out quite a case.

Faith was so astonished she never said a word. Maybe her breath was taken away.

He said she inveigled people into all sorts of wild schemes — she robbed the widow and the fatherless, got them to invest their scanty funds in promotions that they would know to be frauds, if Faith did not mix herself in their affairs.

Finally, when all our hairs were nearly

standing on end he had worked himself up to tell her his own arrows might do no harm if she would let things alone. "That is the worst of the whole business," he wound up, "both for them and for posterity."

Faith and Cupid are just the two dearest people in the world, and I never saw — heard, them so upset. It really looked — seemed, as if there would be serious trouble.

Justice asked me if she hadn't better step in and quiet them down. I said "Yes, for pity's sake, if she dared." That was not just the best thing to say to her and she went at them a little severely.

Will you believe me? They both of them turned upon her and retorted that she did more harm than the two of them together.

Faith began it and went quite at length into the story of wars and prisons and penalties of all sorts — and duels and feuds and quarrels Justice had put people up to.

Homer put in his word saying Justice had had more than Cupid to do with *his* wars. That old taunt of Cupid's seems to rankle in his mind.

Hope was sitting by me and I asked her if she could not say something to distract their attention. She said, "No, she was not a kin-

dergarten teacher or a scientist, and she had no faith in distraction." Procrastination was her strong hold.

She did put in a word finally, in her gentle way, and I defy you to imagine our feelings when Justice turned upon her and said she was as bad as any of them.

"Justice, dear," said I, "it was Hope speaking — you misunderstood I am sure."

"No, Mrs. De Lon," she replied, "she takes people's minds off the blessings they have and might enjoy and keeps them watching for something better, and discontented, of course, all the time. If it were not for her they would not be forever pursuing pleasure."

Then Faith put in: "And you get up almost as many wars as Justice."

But it was Cupid that hit the nail on the head. "How about that lady that ate the apple?" he asked. "Wasn't she hoping to become wise?" He *is* the cleverest youngster!

You do not believe in post-mortem justice? If there is no post-mortem justice there is not any at all. You surely do not think things are fair in this world, taken by itself, do you? Perhaps you believe in that prenatal nonsense — that we even up *here!*

When the meeting broke up and I supposed I was all alone, Justice sat down by me. It seems she had stayed behind to readjust her bandage. The fastening is very insecure and she is always stopping to tie it — as father used always to be stopping me to tie up my shoes. We had leather strips for strings, which never broke, but would come untied.

Justice says I am one of her very few friends, and that she feels her unpopularity more than anyone supposes.

"I had my name changed once," she said, "and hoped that I should get rid of some of my old odium, but I might as well have kept it."

I did not understand what she meant by that, and was afraid of finding some skeleton in her closet if I asked.

"It used to be Nemesis," she volunteered at last, as if to have the worst over with.

I was so shocked I almost cried out — and shrank away from her a bit — but I caught myself and coughed it off.

It seems she has aliases — like Diana and lots of respectable people. She is Nemesis in Hell — "and nobody has to go there unless he wants to," she said — and Justice in Heaven, and on Earth she mixes her rôles.

"I did not suppose you went into Heaven," I asked. "I thought Mercy took that for her province."

"Humph!" she said to herself; then, "Are you a Universalist?"

All she has to do is to see that people get their deserts wherever they are — or someone else's. That is the very trouble! Nobody wants his deserts.

I told her I had heard of people who went to Heaven that I thought did not deserve to be there. She says that is all right too; they inherit rights they were not born to and have not earned. She passes on all their credentials and has the papers on file.

I asked if people down below earned their punishment or were born to it, and she said: "Both."

"Are there any babies down there?" said I. I knew there weren't, but wanted to see what she'd say.

"Humph!" she said. "If there are they are lucky not to have grown up and deserved more stripes than their fathers. And they are better off than they could have been in this world."

"Yes," I said, and told her father's old idea, which she liked. Of course she knows things

she must not tell, but she admitted that there were people who had infinitesimal degrees of punishment.

"On the whole," she wound up, "most of them may be as comfortable as they were in this life, but that is not saying much."

"I do not suppose many of them wish they had not been born?" I asked.

"Only one," she answered. "But the endlessness of it is what appals them."

Being disembodied, you see, they have no transmigration or metamorphosis to look forward to. They have no old body to exchange for a new. Tithonous could cling to something — even in his grasshopper stage. It is a good deal pleasanter for some people to have the Gate of Death shut before them than behind — but not for all.

A sweet little girl has been sleeping this hundred years by Trinity Church, in a bed which would rent, if properly divided into stories, for two thousand a year. She lay down when she was not yet in her teens and if we suppose the writing on her bed-head is her voice, she says something very simple — like the three wise men at sea in a bowl — but quite as significant.

You have to scratch away the grass to find it:

"When the Archangel's trump shall blow
And souls and bodies jine
What crowds will wish their lives below
Had been as short as mine."

We seem to think that if one cannot go to Heaven at all, the longer he lives here the better — when it is quite the other way.

It is a comfort to think that the wickeder people are the shorter the average of life, and that in the very darkest corners of the earth almost everybody dies in infancy.

If there is a Limbo for unbaptised children it must be a very happy place — a sort of Peristan with only the longing for Heaven to mar the joy. Such longing as we have, while we struggle so hard to keep out of it!

I was almost wishing that Justice would move on when Cupid came back and plumped down between us, all out of breath. I asked him if he had been off on a lark.

"No," said he, "I am no Ganymede, to ride bird-back. I have wings of my own."

I told him I did not mean a real lark, and he said: "Venus never allowed us to talk slang. I don't understand it." Probably she never thought he was big enough to learn it.

XXII

HELEN is great fun! She was here all the morning, doing some lace work she learned from the Sisters in Shanghai. She thinks my beans a great scheme. I was working away at them when she came and caught me.

She knows all sorts of out-of-the-way things.

She told us a story of a New Zealand fisherman in mythical times, who, when he was out of fish-hooks, killed his two sons and used their jaw bones —" like Samson," she put in unconsciously. As a requital for the loss of their lives he promoted the right eye of the elder to be the morning star, and the right eye of the younger to be the evening star.

One would think that the honour was abundant compensation, but it seems the Sun was so outraged that it refused to shine any longer.

Old Morm ran after it three days, and finally by his entreaties persuaded it to shine half the time. Then he made the moon, and

tied it to the sun with a long string, so that every time the sun went down, the moon would come up, and overcome in part the darkness to which they were doomed for the other half-day.

The story seemed incomplete, for we have no hint as to what became of the two others, the left, eyes.

We talk of Newton constantly.

"Do you remember, Oudene," she asked to-day, "the time you insisted that Watson Washburn"— he was sexton and chorister both, a great singer —"wrote Watt's Select Hymns?"

Father always gave them out "Watt's *and* Select Hymns," don't you know, and I thought it was Watson of course. Father's name was Calvin too and when they talked of Calvinists and -ism I supposed he was the "great original."

Helen is two years older than I. Her mother came to Newton after her father died. She barely remembers our Alice, so I must have been nine at least and should have known better long before — if anyone had told me.

We went over that dear old church splinter by splinter, from the hole in the platform,

which ran the whole length of its front,— where Ell Adams sprained his ankle the night we were catching June bugs to put in Libbie's room — to the little cupboards under the pulpit behind the Table, and the hysop that grew on the wall. She says the Sabbath School books were kept in the north cupboard and the dust-rags and the communion silver in the south, "Which it was *exactly* the other way," I assured her in Wolfville parlance.

"I'll write to June Chase and ask," she wound up, forgetting like me that the old church site is long ago the ashy haunt of owls and bats.

The choir sat in the rear of the church, in a long gallery over the lobby — which latter ran across the whole front and was divided longitudinally by a flight of three steps into an upper "Court of the Women" and a lower "Court of the Men" on a level with the platform outside, where they preferred to stay in the summer, unless it was *too* hot.

We tried to remember who played the melodeon, and who sang base and alto and the other parts and what had become of William Draper who had such a fine tenor voice, and of Watson's old tuning fork.

It was customary for the congregation to rise during the singing — especially of a solo or duet — and turn quite about so their backs were facing the pulpit, and they could see the singers, the great hoop skirts in vogue making the turning a laborious process.

The city visitors — we had no "resorters" in those days, or ever a day's board paid in Newton — were especially embarrassed in trying to conform to our ways. Because of their greater beam and lack of practice they were sometimes involved in quite protracted struggles.

Father had the best view of their distresses, and when a Washington belle was present one day he said he surely thought there was a stray dog or calf caught under her skirts and fighting to get loose, they snapped out so in different directions after she stopped touching them.

Sometimes the fractious garments could not be conquered, and the wearer had to stand alone facing her smiling fellow-worshippers.

We all wore them, even when we were so small that they flung our upper skirts into our faces every time we sat down.

Mrs. Bates told me that when they lived in Middleton and she could not have been more

than six, her mother bought a hoop skirt for her of a pedlar, and her brother Harry went out on the back door-step and cried because he couldn't have one too. It was really a mania. Hooplessness was practically nakedness.

The minister's pew was in the Amen Corner, at father's right. There was only one pew ahead of us, and it was never occupied because the minister was not, by any possible effort, to be seen from any part of it. We could see him from where we sat, if we looked up at an angle of forty-five degrees through the railing. Mother could see him, if she sat at the end of the pew and "looked aloft" as Johnny Abbot exhorted us to do whenever he "spoke a piece."

We children did not care, for we had a fine view of the congregation and they of us.

Father had to go up three steps to the sacramental platform, where the cupboards were, and six more from that to the pulpit, which was draped and upholstered with rich crimson damask. We had to be sure that he brought his sermon and his handkerchief, for in lieu of the latter he once displayed Margaret's baby shirt.

There was no other church in the town and

members came from homes, four, five, six, and in one direction eight miles away. There were four hundred members, and I've heard father boast eighty men who could be asked to lead a meeting, if necessary.

I told you there were long rows of horse-sheds behind the church and along Station street. Each man had his own stall and some of the more worldly minded ones would deposit their wives and daughters upon the great platform with chivalrous grace, only assumed for Sunday display, and then gather in groups about the sheds.

That made the further end of the seat very desirable. Many a choice bit of gossip we heard as we sat by that window with our heads demurely and ostentatiously bowed for the opening prayer. Once I heard Levi Nelson telling Sol Barrows what a time he had when his second wife died and his two little boys — almost the same day. "But," he wound up, "I never had the tuck took out of me till my barn burnt up."

We depended upon the late comers for entertainment during the first half hour. Our clay roads delayed many and various casualties hindered others. Our father's predecessor was said to have prayed, upon one oc-

casion, for those who were present, and for those who were on their way, and for those who were at home getting ready to come.

The first Summer that Mr. Kennedy spent in Newton, he said, was the one when we had the "Fourth of July." He was sent to spend the vacation with his uncle, Major Whipple. He was in a military school somewhere, fitting for college. The short jacket and brass buttons which, he says, made him feel conspicuous and silly, made a great sensation among us children — or I should probably have forgotten him.

That Celebration was a great event. Long tables were set in the Common, near the row of little butternut trees father had set out because he loved them so.

Aunt Sallie Britton brought two cakes for the Walbridge table, decorated in intricate arabesques with pink and green sugared caraway and coriander seeds on the white frosting.

Amanda Evans, with no Moslem prohibition in *her* mind, had constructed a pair of doves on hers. They were a nine days wonder to us all.

Somebody made a long speech — Oration — before we could eat. Mr. Kennedy remembered the name of the orator but I have

forgotten again. We children did not dream of whispering, even to each other.

It was certainly five years later that I first spoke to Mr. Kennedy. His first name is Alfred but I never heard anyone call him by it alone. The men left off the Mister, of course. He was graduating from Williams and Jack was a Sophomore. Let me *see* — I was not quite fourteen. Jack's home was about a mile beyond Major Whipple's. They used to come to borrow books of father.

He went to Germany for three years and came back a man of the world, with a real scar. Jack was in West Point then and we were great friends. After that he went to Washington and had some secretaryship for a year or two and did not know Jack and I were engaged.

He came up for the wedding and was the life of it all. The following year he went to Madras, and rose from one position to another as the years went on. He and Jack always wrote. Two letters came from him after Jack's last.

Who was that with Amy? Mrs. 'Asham? Poor woman, her husband is getting so childish! She is like a mother to him now.

Yes, I think when people live together all their lives they do change rôles. The first ten years the husband mothers her, and the last ten she mothers *him*. It is beautiful to watch the "mothering" but there is apt to be difficulty during the period of reconstruction. There is a time when neither is quite in authority, and if the husband is jealous of his prerogatives or the wife insistent, why, there is trouble. The neighbours say "After they have lived together for thirty years!" As if that wasn't just the reason.

By the way, I did not mean to mention it, but just between us I think that Helen admires Mr. Nelson rather extravagantly. When she first came she talked about him so constantly, and she has omitted to mention him so carefully of late that I almost wondered.

Are you sure she hears from Captain Sutton regularly?

I took a round about way to help to-day, telling her how high church he was, and that when he first came he was constantly admiring the "Brothers" of this Order, and the "Sisters" of that. I did not mention his

belief or vow — I don't know that it amounts to that, though — of celibacy.

Helen always was impressionable.

Yes, yes I am ready.

Amy lost her drive because of the rain to-day.

I asked old Mary last night when she was taking in the clothes-line if she thought it would rain to-morrow. "I don't know, mum," she replied in the happiest voice, "I hope not." When Abram brought up the letters I asked him the same question, to make sure, and he said, "I don't know, mum, I 'spose so."

They were characteristic answers. Mary is far more comforting but, I must admit, Abram is more satisfactory. He draws the fangs of hope, you might say. I don't believe he ever in his life was "unhappily disappointed." When he says a thing, somehow, you know the worst is over and you can look it square in the eye.

Does Mary get disappointed? Yes, a thousand times a day — or she would if she wasn't made of rubber. Fate plays tennis with her for a ball and they both enjoy it — the fools!

Of all persons, I don't mind the rain. For me there is no cause to worry lest *some* days be dark and dreary.

I love to hear it rain too — and *do* you spell that *it* with a capital?

Can you think how a blind person treasures his other senses? Bartimaeus says that after he had learned to see he could always tell a blind person by the way he listened, and a deaf person by how he looked. One of the five "doors to the soul" being nailed up the others are set ajar or flung wide open by way of compensation.

No, we did not have a Club meeting to-day. Paul talked with me for a while.

"Five doors of the soul" — Lamartine, isn't it, says they are the five strands of a cord which binds spirit and matter together in what *he* calls an "adulterous union." When one strand breaks, one must be just so far — one-fifth — dead.

Once Amy had a very naughty class in Sunday School with a particularly unruly member. When they were unusually restless one day, she asked — seeing the lesson was about Peter and James — which they would

rather be; crucified or have their heads cut off with a sword.

That dashed them, and they were all attention on the instant, frozen into their improper positions. After the first clap, they settled down to consultation and voted unanimously and eagerly for crucifixion. When she went into detail, they all changed their minds except that worst one, "Squiddles." He insisted upon crucifixion so stubbornly that she became interested to know his reason, which he stated promptly and emphatically:

"I want to die all in one piece."

So did Nero, and I don't, myself, think it the ideal way to die one sense at a time — I surely have fallen into a pit. Help me out!

The Greeks — fortunately, you remember, Amy reads me all the footnotes, had a better simile.

Yes, now we go right through and read the footnotes first. She suggested it and it works finely. You get the real vitals of a book that way, segregated, like the viscera in some stalls of the market at Naples. The book is just the shell. Some pink-and-white books do not have any notes for fear *they'll* get skipped if they do.

That note about the Greeks said the senses were five sticks bound into a torch and the soul was the flame,— or, the strings of a lyre and the soul was the harmony.

When the torch went out or the lyre was broken what became of the flame or the music? There was no note to tell that, or to say who lighted the torch or played the lyre.

Paganini did not mind a string or two broken — why should I? Because I'm not the musician, perhaps. One string may make more music in some hands than five in others. I'll make all the music I can with the four that are left. I can at least avoid discords and silence.

So about the torch — if one stick is gone, all the other rays are left. And after all we do not notice the pure white light so much. It is when the light is shattered in the rainbow that we realize the promise. My arching bow may lack some colour but I will not lament for the rest are more apparent because it is gone.

It is well to behave oneself quietly if it may be. It was Montesquieu, I think, that said to Lord Chesterfield who chafed under his deafness, "I have learned to be blind."

At first sight one would think anyone could be blind whose eyes were put out, but it takes a good deal of study and effort to do it successfully and creditably.

A beheaded fowl does not conduct itself with the dignity and decorum which death rather demands. So, one suddenly bereft of sight is likely to assume quite unbecoming mental attitudes until he has schooled himself to a new code of etiquette. When he has once "learned to be blind" he will take the same pride in it that one has in any kind of skill. His friends call it Resignation.

We get ourselves weighted down with spiritual barnacles as we "fare to the doomstead."

XXIII

CUPID came by this morning very early. He is on "tower" during the night, now the moon is full.

He tells me his bow was made of apple wood and strung with a bit of serpent skin. It reminded me of the Garden of Eden, but he says "No." "Venus made it," he added, "and had only her own mouth for a model."

That was long before Jove's day. He, Cupid, had an easy time then. Hymen did most of the work; they were in a sort of a partnership. Later, he had to leave Hymen to run the Works and to go on the road,— so to speak,— himself, with only a few arrows. The market was not so extensive at first, but he worked up quite a business till the Flood broke it all up.

They stopped the works entirely for a year, and business was dull for a long time after. They have been a very conservative Concern since that event.

"Shem rather blamed the Flood on *me*," he went on, but did not finish his sentence until I asked:

"Did you have any hand in it?"

"I would say 'no' to anyone else," he replied, "but seeing its you, I don't mind saying, that, trying to extend our territory, I did go up once and shoot some angels."

"You didn't really!" I cried rudely before I thought.

"Yes," he sighed, "I really did. I wanted to do something to show Hymen how smart I was, and I really did. It was an awful blunder — worst I ever made."

It made trouble and Hymen nearly drove him out of the firm. Venus patched it up, but he had no doubt the Deluge was precipitated by the confusion and their quarrel.

On the whole he has gradually come to the conclusion that it is better for him to confine himself to the lower orders of society — milk-maids and shepherds. The higher up he gets the more mischief he does.

Royal families, he says, favour Hymen altogether, and, if he ever does shoot on their preserves, he does more harm than good. Sometimes Hymen just gets a family settled and he goes and shoots the whole thing

"cross-eyed," he said. He has been known to run a whole train off the track and smash an entire dynasty. Again some arrow, shot just at a venture, opens a switch and some utterly illegitimate successor pulls the whole rolling stock off the main line.

I suggested that he must find much more appreciative friends among the cultured classes. He admitted that, but urged that a little more poetry, or portraiture or music did not compensate him for the uneasiness caused by disasters he had initiated.

I don't think I have appreciated Cupid as a conscientious boy.

I tried to talk over some of the Philosophers with him, and get his opinion of them, but he was too tired. He said he hated Plato personally, but liked his ideas.

I told him our American Philistine set great store by him and even proclaimed publicly that: "Love was the great Enlightener." He picked up and flew off at that only saying:

"He *knows*."

XXIV

I AM glad you did not come yesterday. It was one of my off days. Amy came in the morning and asked what she could do for me. "Nothing," I laughed, for I was in the best of spirits, "unless you stand out of my sunshine."

It had just come over me that some Alexander must be standing by my tub and cutting off every ray of light, as if he were doing it knowingly, maliciously. I get the queerest notions, like that, about what makes me blind — or, rather, why I can't see. The fault is never in *me,* of course.

I suppose every proper Diogenes has his own Alexander, but no Diogenes should or would be his own. He would prove that he was not a philosopher if he did and so beg the question by a reductio ad absurdum, when he "obstructed himself."

All this foolishness is only my way of whistling in the dark to keep up my courage. A talk with Hope or Faith would do me more

good, I have no doubt, and make me happier.

Who is it says that every faith has a calming influence "because every faith is a hope, and every hope renders us patient." I would be the last person to slander a virtue, but I really do not see my way clear to agree to that. I would sooner charge hope with making us *im*patient.

Hope is water heaving, tossing, ebbing, flowing. Faith is solid rock, one and indivisible.

XXV

CUPID says we might as well talk of a "little squab Faith" because he happened to find that Faith had wings too. It is uncommonly hard for him to forgive a slur like that. I told him if he did not think about it he'd forget it, and that that was the best variety of forgiveness.

I never was initiated, but I read somewhere years ago, that after the celebration of the Eleusinian mysteries, a benediction was pronounced which ended with the words "Watch and be pure." Now! *Can* one watch without eyes? — or be pure? No more can one "watch and pray" so he will surely fall into temptation. And it is only the blessed pure who can see God.

Those who sought the Holy Grail and talked of the Grail Domain did not seem to realise that only a Christian could see it anywhere; or else, they did not realise that they were yet in their sins.

Its invisibility — that's a funny word to

have five eyes! — is very marvelous, considering its radiance and splendour.

The Grail Domain and the Kingdom of Darkness must be co-extensive, each occupying the others' interstices. Their subjects are best of friends and next of kin and there is most charming fellowship between light and darkness. The lion lies down with the lamb and she makes no protest —

Long ago, in a poem Mr. Nelson brought down, "The web of night settled over the world." Thinking it over, I remembered how the darkness used to come on, as if a veritable web were spinning and its thickening meshes shutting out the light.

It was easy to run on until I had spun myself into a cocoon and was quite in the dark,— a pupa, a chrysalis, anything hopelessly shut in. Even future release must involve such a surprise that I do not long for it — my imago state!

But I am shunted off again.

I fell to worrying about Amy later. What would she think I meant by her standing in my light? If I had been a man, thank Fortune,— is *she* blind, and am I forgetting to Club her all this time? — I never should have

been such a fool as to worry about that. I composed several speeches to correct her if —

I could not apologise. It took me an hour to decide that. I could not remark in any "by the bye" that I did not mean to say it. That only took half an hour. I could not ask Mr. Nelson to set her straight — that took several hours. I could not make a clean breast of the whole thing and ask Helen. But it only took ten seconds to decide that it would not do at all.

After being upset all day, I managed at night without any trouble. She was holding my hand up to her cheek, in a way she has, at bedtime. Naturally as could be I remarked:

"I wish Mr. Nelson would not come so often! I'm tired of hearing him talk about Mr. Kennedy every minute," so she'd see I was not the least bit interested in him, don't you know.

"We all talk about him too much, perhaps," she said after a long pause — in a tired tone she only has once in a long, long time.

You can imagine how I felt then! Trying to exorcise one devil I had swept and garnished seven more with little devilkins hanging to their tails thick as opossums.

XXVI

I CERTAINLY have had the black butterflies, as they call the blues in their "glittering French." They are a variety which are not "feathers from the wings of God" as true butterflies are supposed to be. I fear that Eblis sheds the feathers which are the black butterflies of our dark days. They have fallen about me thicker than if the "Widdecourt folk" had picked all their black geese.

Is it a week since you came last? Amy wrote a note to Mr. Nelson the next day but one, and he came and they had a long talk and went somewhere together for two hours. He did not come in to see me. I wondered if it were possible that she would postpone, or even break her engagement, until I could not bear it.

If it had not been for Helen I do not know what we should have done — and our reading, which we have not interrupted with nonsense and gossip as usual.

Twice I told Helen I wished Mr. Kennedy would come back to help with some quandaries I was trying to unravel about Indian mythology. I hoped she would mention it to Amy, and I told Mr. Nelson I wished he lived here so I could appeal to him at my convenience.

"He always knows just how a thing can be unsnarled," I added as Amy came in, hoping she would ask "Who?"

"You certainly need him," Helen laughed, "for you're always at some sort of a snarl."

After they were gone I got Abram to bring me a ball of twine and I unrolled it all in a heap and mussed it all up and am going to unsnarl it instead of working at my beans. They are getting worn out—"split up" like the chickens' bills. I have not begun at it yet for I lost the end letting go to hide it under the cushion when I heard them coming. Once I find that again it will be easy enough.

How many hours I sit and think of Sir Philip's "seeléd dove," who, "the blinder she was, the higher she strove."

In some moods I feel myself labouring upwards — like a rocket that last instant before it breaks and sheds its seeds. It seems to despair of further heights, and yet will not

give over the effort after starting up so proudly. It tries one angle and another until it bursts and falls — the very element of fire within, which would not yield, is the glory of its failure. Humility outshines ambition.

I labour upward, but not up; and my failures are not bursts of flame and glory. Still, since my eyes have been "seeléd," I am sure I have striven higher. I wish I did not know how eyes came to be "seeléd."

It is rather surprising that the imagination of the blind dwells so much more satisfactorily upon sky-scapes than land-scapes. Can it be that our admiration for the latter has been more freely expressed, and partly exhausted, while the skies have had only our silent and involuntary homage so long, that there is an accumulation of enthusiasm ready to break out when the other avenue of ecstasy is cut off?

I begged Amy to reread that sentence from Emil Hennequin till I could repeat it to myself —

"The sharp peaks point the extreme pinnacles of their rocks towards the unknown and magnificently vaulted abysms, vermeil and tenebrous, whence spread the imperious splendour of the Sun, the playful sweetness of

the Moon and the peace of the mysteriously palpitating stars."

Peace and palpitation, here so contradictory, there may go hand in hand. Peace — no longer negative, but rich with throbbing life and action.

"The peace of the mysteriously palpitating stars"— It is not the peace which is mysterious, but the palpitation. Where is the heart of which the throbbing star is the pulse?

I go on and on, tearing a thought to tatters until I bring up with a smash against my sense of the ridiculous. It reminds me of the stone wall Otis Eaton built at the foot of the long hill in his pasture where the boys used to coast. Arthur said he built it so they would have "a handy place to stop." They had always come down the hill for a start, and half a mile over the pond on the strength of it, up to that time.

Helen pricks some of my bubbles. I'll have to suck my poetic lollypops by myself if she is too much of a Philistine. She gave me a bit of Polynesian cosmogony, apropos of my Hennequin. To them the universe is a huge calabash — a gourd, of which the earth is the body, the sky the cover, seeds the stars, and pulp the clouds. All this the Supreme

One carries slung in a net of which the rainbow is the handle. That last touch almost redeems the whole.

Do you recall that once upon a time, when Edmund Burke was careening through a speech, he made the remarkable and incontrovertible statement that "bulls shut their eyes when they push"? He must have been a close observer, and had remarkable facilities for investigations.

I remember to have read of a girl who saw an angry bull, but "being timersome, shut her eyes all the time she was seeing it" as most anyone would do.

After all, I believe there is an instinct to close the eyes at the instant of exerting unusual physical force. Even electric cars shut off lights on up grades. I cannot imagine anyone firing a gun without shutting his eyes. It is a merciful offset to the discovery of explosives that the exploder is momentarily sightless.

I have run off the track somewhere. I had not finished about the bull. The Philistines thought Samson could work better, evidently,

without his eyes, and so with the blinded oxen.

Apropos of the blinded bullocks, where did we read that the Scythians used to blind the slaves whose principal occupation was to churn? If they could work no better, they could not run away. I presume there was a conservation of energy that made them more energetic as Samson was—"eyeless at Gaza, grinding at the mill." I know I hunt for my bean more industriously than I could if I had my sight,—or any sight at all.

Poor dear Amy! Such a pathetic little thing happened! You know they don't like my bean-hunts and when I get them to bring the bag they will often make me promise when they go away that I will not find it but once. I do not remember what made me think, but one time when I had not really promised I hunted through and found *four* beans. I did not tell them, dear hearts. I fear that they plan and worry about me more than I know.

I threw out all the beans but one; at least I think there is only one left, and when I could not find it last night, I begged Amy to

look and see if it was surely there, and she said, "Yes," but put her head down on my shoulder and sobbed, "Oh, Oudene!"

"You are too tired, little sister," was all the comfort I could give her, so she went for the Bible and read.

There are Helen and Amy back from their drive. I really wish we could have more time, though I have no doubt you are tired enough I get along so slowly. My rosaries and snarls and beans engross too much of my attention.

Haven't I told you about my rosaries? I have three, one Buddhist, one Mohammedan and a real Christian one. Each Christian bead represents a prayer; each Moslem bead one of the ninety-nine names of God. The Buddhist beads I do not understand, but Mr. Kennedy does.

XXVII

THE usual Sabbath day's journey for able-bodied Newtonians was to the grave-yard, out of the village and a mile from the church toward Town Hill. I had to learn that a grave-yard might be also a church-yard from later observation and experiences which puzzled me not a little from their incongruity. I could not see how a procession could get the proper perspective, and fore-shortening deprived it of all dignity as I imagined it.

"Under the pines" was the village phrase. No one in our Newton ever would have said "When I am dead and gone" in the brusque way I have heard it, but "When I'm under the pines."

I do not know how many ages ago those pines began the prelude to their requiem. Never since the Lanesboro pioneers came into the forest and cut down their age-long fellows has it been intermitted. The sough of them is in my ears and the smell of them is in my nostrils, and the feel of their needles under my feet this moment.

When mother was well, she used to take us with her, and we sat on the soft warm carpet of brown, while she read to us from *Peep of day* or *Precept upon Precept,* we, meantime, playing with the new tight cones or the old brown ones with their hopeless, wide-spread — laminae? What is the right name for the scales they are shingled with?

I remember only once going to the cemetery upon a week-day. We must have been passing with our fish-poles or our empty berry pails. I know Jennie and Louise — I can't remember their last names — were with me. Jennie's mother was dead and Louise's father and as soon as we had climbed over the stile which served as a horse-block for "mourners," they with one consent left me standing alone and abashed, while they went in opposite directions and kneeled each by the grave of her dead parent and hid their faces in the grass.

A sense of spiritual inferiority overwhelmed me. There was not a grave in the whole enclosure I could call my own. I slunk back to the stile and sat with my back turned to the inhospitable mounds and my face to the glowing west dangling my useless legs, and was sore *wehmüthig* to think there

were mysteries to which I was an alien. I went home doubting whether I was fit to be the minister's daughter any longer.

I remember that, when the two girls joined me after the silent moments at the graves, Jennie's eyes were red and she remarked to Louise with some complacency, if not reproach:

"I always cry."

One Sabbath when mother had gone with us rather under protest she wished to read to herself in a thick black book she had brought in the little basket with the lemon which was the usual refreshment. I had added to the menu, by permission, a delicious combination of granulated sugar and ground cinnamon which was folded into the corner of a discarded envelope.

When we had found a sequestered corner, mother settled herself with her book and we four were to "walk about very quietly, and not step on the graves or pick any flowers — the periwinkle and spurge, escaped from cultivation, were not taboo — or talk with other children beyond the formal "How do you do," which we never abbreviated on the Sabbath.

We sat down presently and dividing the

cinnamon satisfactorily in our mottled palms, began to consume it a fingertipful at a time. To our sorrow, it was soon gone and we were obliged to attack the lemon.

I presume we ate it as the Cranford ladies their oranges. A hole was made in one end and we took turns at it very amicably for a long time until it began to show signs of diminution. In process of time, however, it became so concave under John's vigorous onslaughts that I was obliged to forbid him to squeeze it. When he ignored my directions I was forced to louder remonstrances and at last actually driven to chastisement. To that he made manual and pedal protest but I had gotten him into position, inverted, and was proceeding as in multiplication when mother arrived without her book or gloves and suspended the operation, howbeit with some difficulty, in spite of my ejaculatory explanations.

It seemed very inconsistent in her for she, herself, advocated corporal punishment and administered it, too, *in extremis*.

Such crises were not frequent at home, but observation convinced us of their occasional necessity and utility.

I recall that, once when father and John

were the *dramatis personae,* Hal ran to the dining-room and fetched his high-chair which he complacently mounted to witness the scene at his ease.

But, on that particular afternoon, John's lamentations were out of all proportion to the injuries I intended to inflict, as he would have found, if he had waited to see.

As it was, parishioners, elect and nonelect, came like the Roman wolf "to his crying." Down the drive some came and up the walks and zigzagging around the graves, to find out the cause of the uproar "*in the minister's family.*"

To increase my chagrin, mother gave them a very inadequate and superficial explanation of the affair, for she herself had not all the data and I was not allowed to elucidate matters until we reached home.

Oh, Mr. Nelson finds Helen very interesting. He was here to-day. It seems he had been to the Bennet's first and no one was in. I told him a lot about her girlhood and our youthful frolics and boarding-school pranks. I was just on the point of suspecting that he was leading me on to talk for my own good, when he asked about Donald,— Captain Sut-

ton, you know. I *was* so foolish the other day!

I told him about their rivalries in class, their long engagement through his college and professional course, and their happy years together.

Sometimes I think Mr. Nelson has almost a morbid interest in matrimony and the relations of wedded folk. If any man was ever wedded to his work he certainly is. He is positively almost selfish in it. I hope Mr. Kennedy won't let Amy work the way she has been doing lately. In his last letter he asked if she was neglecting to work new altar-clothes this year.

If Helen really comes here to live as she threatens, he may let her substitute for Amy sometimes — if she will.

After we had talked ourselves into flickering silence, he proposed again to read to me. This time I begged for an Arabian Night. He does not get much light reading.

As luck would have it,— why is not Luck in the Club! — we happened upon the tale of the merchant who sat by a well eating dates and throwing aside the pips after the fashion of picnickers. All of a sudden a Genius arose from the earth and said he must kill the un-

fortunate merchant because one of the pips had put out his son's eye.

Genii value themselves to demand a man's life for one of their eyes! My old Anglo Saxon book said: "Fifty shillings for putting out the eye of a respectable man." Amy found it for me. If the Genius had taken proper care of his son there'd have been no trouble. Beside, I don't see why Jinns and Gnomes should have eyes any more than cave fish.

I believe he finished the story, but I don't really remember. When I get off the track that way I am as absent-minded as Saint Cuthbert, so absorbed in his devotions that he forgot to take off his boots for months together. We ought both to be ashamed of ourselves.

I made up my mind last night that I could not endure my own remorsefulness any longer and the first thing this morning I asked Amy when Mr. Kennedy was coming back, and "I had so many things to ask him I could not wait much longer." I did not mean to put that last part on, and it took all the edge off my confession. I felt a perfect humbug.

"Do you really want to see him, Oudene?"

she asked, in a tone as much too earnest as mine had been too flippant. It made my heart ache to know how much she cared.

When you love people don't you find it a great deal harder to bear their imaginary troubles, the ones you imagine they have, than your own real ones? I lie awake yet with my flesh creeping, thinking of the time I burned John with the hot spoon I was stirring in my chocolate, and how it must have hurt; yet I don't suppose it has smarted all these years.

"Yes, dear," I said, "I want to *see* him very much." She did not notice my emphasis on the verb, which God forgive me.

"Then I'll write this minute," she said with a hug, "and order him home in your name."

"Yes, in my name," I laughed, and she was too happy evidently to suspect me of mocking her tone.

I think I have told you every word so far. I do not know that I can tell you the rest, we had such a busy day planning.

She had more done towards her trousseau than I suspected and finally asked if I did not think May Day would be a lovely time for a wedding. I said "Yes," and then she said, "It's to be in October, though — perhaps!"

I thought of my rosaries to-day and sent Mary for them. I get them mixed like Nathan's three rings, but I can always distinguish them after a bit. And this reminds me.

I have not been very fortunate with my string. I couldn't find the end, and *couldn't* find it. I am ashamed to tell you that I finally broke it to make an end — of my troubles — I thought, but it was a failure. I had not unsnarled a yard of it when off it all came and I found I had broken it so near the real end! I knew then there were two ends, the other one and the one I had just broken, but I could not find either of them and have not yet. I almost believe it is infinite — *has* no end.

I wish I had someone to teach me that system of writing they used to have for us, using knotted cords to represent letters or words. I forgot whose "system" it was.

We are not going to tell Helen that we have sent for Mr. Kennedy but we will let Mr. Nelson know. Amy says he will be as happy over it as she, almost. If it were generally known it would embarrass Amy in many ways. I am afraid. I wonder who will do

her "Church work" when she is really married. I suppose at first Mr. Kennedy will let her keep on. He has probably promised to let her divide her time equally between me and it! Such promises are so easy to make!

I am ashamed that I thought such a thing.

XXVIII

SPEAKING of light — did you ever think how cruel it is? If Darkness has killed its thousands, Light has killed its tens of thousands. Every lighthouse would be buried in its dead, and every gas jet smothered and blinded if there were none to remove the pitiful creatures — which are just like us only smaller.

Deer are enticed to their death by light, ships lured on by wreckers, fish caught by torch light, and Helen says the Islanders catch octopi and squid by letting fall into the water a hook with a cowry, or a mother-of-pearl plate attached, which attracts the creatures as I can well understand. "The colour and lustre of the shell offers an irresistible fascination to the octopus" and he wraps his arms about it and is drawn up! Isn't it touching to think of him, ugh!

If I could hold in my hand a bit of mother-of-pearl or the tiniest cowry and look at it one moment it seems to me I should be drunk with joy; almost willing to be a squid!

Surely it is the light rather than the heat that Parsees value; hence they should be called Light rather than Fire-worshippers. No Divinity or Sage ever said "I am the Fire" or "I am the Heat of the world" but rather "I am the Light."

XXIX

I'M learning to write with a pin. I prick words into a paper — I can write my own name so Amy guessed it when she came down. We nearly quarrelled because I said it was to be read behind on the rough side of course, and she insisted upon reading it in front on the smooth side. I told her to prick me some big words and I would practice reading them with my finger tips.

"They are as numb now as if they were shod with hoofs, but they can learn," I insisted.

"But, Oudene dear," she groaned, "you can't read by the wrong side."

I finally began to suspect what the trouble was and so I snapped out that she might:

"Please go get me a mirror, then, my dear!"

This has been one of my very naughtiest days — I hope.

Do you know, sometimes a restlessness comes over me that is like insanity — for

doesn't sanity like sleep depend upon the power to think continuously of one and the same thing?

I will not say I become desperate, for despair is quite negative, only the absence of hope. The feeling I have is most emphatically positive and aggressive. My thoughts explode. With the old Gael "I am a raven that has no home, I am a boat tossing from wave to wave, I am a ship that has lost its rudder, I am the apple left on the tree."

"I am the wind which blows over the sea, I am a wave of the deep, I am the bull of seven battles, I am the eagle on the rock, I am a tear of the Sun, I am a salmon in the water, I am a lake in the plain."

I am all these that others have been, and then I am other things that some have dreamed of being.

I am a Gaelic hero "with seven lights in my eyes," I am a doe with "eyes of Vesper gentleness," I am the "dusky arms" of a cloud which strangles the moon in mid career — and makes "day's soft-eyed sister" as dark as the world in which we others live — for I am one of the Hetaerae now.

I am the bird of heaven, singing of the Seven Steps and of the Five Powers, and the

Seven Eyes of God; I am a harp blown upon by "the great blind forces of Destruction"; I am a pharos, "a great red eye" surveying the horizon through the night with my "circular glance."

I was counting my blessings — these different aliases of mine and telling them off on my Christian rosary — (It did not seem right to make them supplant the names of God on the others) — when Cupid came by.

I told him once that when I got tired of the Club I was planning to study up his pedigree. I feared he was offended but he asked very carelessly to-day if I had his family tree twigged out to my liking.

I told him "No," and that I was going to chop it all down, now that I had learned that he was the "bastard creation of barbarous fancy — laid on the door-step of posterity."

I never heard him laugh so, and he made me "say it again" like an infant. He was vexed enough to find that some of it was left out and that I did not know who said it.

That shows just how little moral sense he has. Some sons would have been for fighting a duel over a thing like that.

XXX

YOU'VE been thinking about my mother? And well you may! We were none of us worthy to unloose her latchets!

Dear Mother! she was pretty as a picture, and industrious! You can't think how busy she was, sewing and cooking and ironing and brushing-up, and combing our hair and contriving our clothes; and all those years without once stopping she was reading D'Aubigné's History of the Reformation to "keep up" with father, you know.

"Of course you want to keep his respect," Mrs. Armstrong had said. She always came with her husband when he and father exchanged. Father drove up to Hinesburg Saturday night and stayed at the hotel and then came home after the afternoon sermon so they could all have a visit and "family worship together Sabbath evening." Mr. Armstrong enjoyed that, he said, having no children of his own. One Saturday night our guest-room

stove-pipe smoked so that Mrs. Armstrong "never shut her eyes till one o'clock." She said it so many times I know it must have been true. Mother and Jennie mended it on *Sunday!*

That always seems such a problem — how to keep your husband's respect or his love. I really think it would be better if the conditions on which he was to "love, honour and protect" were incorporated in the service. It is so loosely worded!

Of course you don't know anything about it. I wasn't blaming you. And I don't know anything about it, for Jack died so early — my probation time was not up.

On Saturday night mother had us all to scrub in the tin "hat." It was a weekly ordeal for her. She began with the youngest because *it* had to go to bed first. If any of us made a mistake and sat on the wrong side of the hat away from the visor where the legs were under, it tipped up and all the water was spilled so that the rest of us could get no bath.

Yes, we could too, but we always told mother that, when we were grown up, just to plague her.

Then there were the shoes to study over and blacken, and we all had to run and help lubricate the shoe-brush, and mother had to deal out the clean clothes for "to-morrow," — the very word was pronounced reverently.

It was no small evening's work to be plagued about afterward by ungrateful grown-ups. I heard father, too, tell a lady — a *city* lady — that he used to tie up the holes in his stockings with a string like the end of a bag! A man to say that who would have hunted in the China closet for his clean shirt as soon as in his own "bottom drawer"! We learned very early that there were times when our father was not a good pattern for our talk!

One of those Saturday nights, I remember Margaret was all ready for her turn, when there was a rap at the door, and old Miss King came in for a call.

Mother had stuck Margaret into the closet, supposing the sacred bath hour would be respected even by those who were not performing their own ablutions as they should be.

I was lying down with Hal while he went to sleep and he kept on cooing as if he knew I was all a-quiver to creep away as soon as

ever he dropped off. Alice was finished and tucked in, already sound asleep.

Miss King had not "been done right by" and she had a long tale. There Margaret stood, poor little sleepy thing, almost an hour for mother thought surely Miss King would go in another minute. I really believe her pre-occupation and mis-fit answers multiplied the repetitions and explanations. Miss King was Sophi Kirby's sister and they were both so touchy mother would not have dared let her see she was worried, she had almost "lifted her letter" once already.

It seemed hours to me before she went and there Margaret was, shivering away. She would no more have peeped than a little partridge under a leaf.

At last Mr. Nelson and I have had a long talk about Amy. I told him how happy I was in her joy and several things equally original. That I had not the least presentiment that I should be lonelier: that Mr. Kennedy would be an unfailing source of entertainment to me.

He seemed very much "pleased and relieved" as he put it, that I took the *view* of it I did. God forgive him!

Then we talked on about Amy while I tried to think how I could hint that he would be wise to find a helpmate for himself. I did not manage it, fearing his celibacy notions, but I shall think of a way sometime.

We talked about her prettinesses and dearnesses and goodnesses. He ought to appreciate her after all the help she has been to him, and he does, but he does not seem to realise what it will be to have her time taken up with home work as it must be. We shall not dismiss Mary and Abram necessarily but of course she ought not to have time for outside things. "She can't leave me to amuse Mr. Kennedy all the time," I laughed. "I'll need her help."

Poor Mr. Nelson! He takes it so cheerfully. He will find out later the "expulsive power of a new affection."

We talked about Mr. Kennedy too. I said I had long ago given him a brother's place in my heart. It seems he has cabled from London for a refusal of the Governor Appleton property next door to us — with a beautiful lawny grove between. I forget you can see it!

Amy never told me that. I supposed they would live on here. It is just as well not. I

fancy Mr. Kennedy has a go-down full of cabinets and rugs and cash-chests somewhere. No one ever went to the East without coming back with a gnawing and corroding desire to fit out a house all himself — a composite Brahmo-Chinese, Japanned affair, with kakamono alcoves and a Diwan-i-Am and a Diwan-i-Khas and a Peacock Throne for aught I know.

Never mind! It does not matter to me what sort of mixture it is! It cannot offend my eyes.

How I hate to get those old Moguls on my mind! The conquering Pathan kneeling on the breast of one in Agra Fort and gouging out one eye, then telling his attendants to do the other, is as bad as Shakspeare and runs in my mind like a pink-trip-slip and a five-cent fare. Helen came in just then.

Do you know — Amy asked her to tell me that they thought of having the wedding earlier — perhaps next month to suit the Bishop's convenience.

"Oh, my dear!" I cried, "Send her to me. Why should she dread to tell me herself?" But she was away and I had hours to wait.

She sobbed on my shoulder when she came in, until I had comforted her.

"When will Mr. Kennedy arrive?" I asked.

She gave me a quick hug before she said, "Saturday, dear!"

Carlyle says everything is sudden to the blind, but some things are suddener than others. Her next question was more sudden than ever:

"And you will come to the wedding, Oudene?"

I could not say No, much as I should prefer it, and vigorously as I thought it. I only answered:

"We'll *see.*"

"*Don't,* Oudene," she groaned. I fear I have given myself those morbid digs, just for fun, until she is on the lookout for them constantly. I must break myself of it; they annoy the others too.

I suppose I must go to the wedding, now that I am committed and *see* the thing through.

XXXI

I'M going to tell you about our exchanges to-day, and we will not talk of anything, please, before we get at it.

I do not suppose father exchanged with his brother ministers more than three or four times a year, but when I look back it seems oftener, as telegraph poles multiply in the distance.

When those strange men came to be entertained it is a miracle how we ever did it. The guest-room had to be made ready and the study had to be swept and dusted after father had gone. We did not dare touch it while he was there, and would not then except to avert the scandal of exposure to a stranger.

There was always something queer about every exchange, I remember. One was named Lyon and we did not know how to spell it so we sat shivering on the bottom step until the breakfast bell should rouse him from his lair, to seek what he might devour.

The only leonine feature about him proved to be his name.

One, Mr. Baker, had been gored by a bull and always told us about the scars on his chest but did not let us see them.

A Mr. Arnold we all liked. Once he came early so that he might have a talk with father before he got away. I heard him say that some "good man, too," a predecessor of his was "so all-killing pious they could not live with him," in *Orange!*

Mr. Hooper, who always brought us candies, had married the daughter of the lady who gave us "Shakspeare and his Friends" that hung in the parlour for Aunt Hoyt to look at when we were not there. We thought his visits all too far apart.

Mr. Ward only came once — but that was enough. He stood stock-still in the pulpit, right in the middle of his sermon when I had to take Margaret home one day. You've no idea how many miles it was down that aisle or how many eyes there were, not only in people's heads but all through space — like the smiles of Cheshire cats.

When I told father upon his return, with great indignation, he said mother should have put us out through the window at the end

of our pew. For the first time, I wished that he sat in the seat with us like other fathers. Mother never thought of things like that!

After Mr. Beaman was there father asked mother if he smiled all the while he was preaching. She did not know, having seen only his profile. "I never saw him stop smiling but once in the pulpit," father added, "and that was when he lost his place." All our ministers read their sermons then. People were more exacting and critical than they are in these loose times.

Twice I remember father's bringing a book down from the study to read something to mother. Once it was some stupid stuff and we had to be reprimanded for disturbing them. The other time I am sure it must have been Tam O'Shanter. All five of us capered around in our glee and Hal fairly screwed a hole in his apron pretending he understood it.

I want to tell you more about the other children but always relapse into reminiscences — perhaps because I am wondering if I am quite at liberty to do even as I would be done by.

We were quite normal minister's children — not the proverbial kind in the least.

John was very emphatic. That is not quite the word, either, and positive won't do. He regarded his statements as axioms and we learned that it saved time to let them go at that. If his word was challenged in earlier years he considered a sepulchral "I prove" an end to all controversy.

Margaret was tragic, violent. She was a conscientious mother to her dolls who found her a kind but not an indulgent parent. She whipped them with a vigour Xerxes' flagellants might have emulated, and did it with her tongue gnashed between her teeth with a sort of triple-lipped effect which we all delighted to imitate. Bless her heart! How I did love her.

Her maternal feelings were wantonly outraged on one occasion. Father and mother had gone to a funeral which put us upon the idea that we would have some obsequies in honour of her Martha, whose neck had recently been broken. She howled and lamented on the bottom door-step, but we proceeded with singing, prayer, reading of obituary, sermon, and finally interment.

She never forgot or forgave us, and years after, when her canary died, she buried it in the middle of the gravel walk, and grimly

watched us hold a funeral under every tree in the yard, hoping thus to make sure of the site.

If I must say it, that shouldn't, I was the soul of family pride and more ambitious for "the children's" success than any of them. Like Rousseau I considered their reputations as valuable an asset as their characters, though, as I found later, that was rank heterodoxy in New England.

I think it is La Harpe who says that the chimera of perfection has caused more misery than any other that ever infested the world.

I had, intermittently, a burning zeal to secure the complete sanctification of all the younger members of the family. I longed to correct any imperfection that I detected and felt my lack of authority a misfortune all around.

I was telling Mr. Kennedy about it once and he took occasion to congratulate me upon my success. He never knew Alice but remembers her in our pew at church — our darling and beauty!

Hal asked to see her once and when he was told that there would be only bones in the little coffin, begged that when he went to Heaven he might be allowed to take his bones with him.

For myself I meant to be a very good little girl so that I'd not have any naughty words or acts to mourn over afterward. When mother died — which would probably be in seven or eight years if she lived to be thirty-six like grandmother,— a ripe old age, it seemed! — I should have to take things in charge. I planned a very delightful funeral and shed my full quota of tears many times over, going through the agony of parting and committment with unfeigned distress.

After that I was going to bring up the children to be good men and women — composing exhortations and reproofs suitable for sundry occasions, and divers infractions of my precepts. There would probably be a good many more of us by that time. I worried a great deal about my ability to manage the then infant.

All these lamentations and resolutions came after I had been sent to bed — before I fell asleep.

XXXII

ARE you ready now?

We used to be very studious of our father's moods and of mother's too. As for father, sometimes it was safe to approach him on one subject, sometimes, on another; sometimes, on any, often on none.

We were studious of our mother's ignorances, which we did our best to conserve. She often said "Yes," because she did not know the risk involved, when father would have said "No." It was she that let us go over to Mr. Dick's barn and help husk corn, and father that put a stop to it. Once father had shaken his ambrosial locks we were never to ask her, and his nod was only revocable by himself, but if mother had said yes he still had the power to veto and it behooved us to shun him.

I tell Helen I used to pity her because her Aunt Julia always had to have a finger in her pies. We were grateful, as a last resort, that with all our distresses we had no aunts.

"Do you remember," Helen asked, "how we used to go in pairs and trios, when anything had gone wrong, from one mother to another and help each other "tell"?

Whether it helped or not depended upon whether the "other girls" were adroit enough to take the blame all on themselves at the crucial moment. That was fair enough, for each individual was innocent in turn.

Yet I would not for a moment admit that we were little hypocrites.

There were three consecutive days upon which father said "Yes" to every request I made. There was a tacit understanding between us, and this was the way of it.

I lay awake one night so long that father came down from the study to read a few pages of his embryo sermon to mother, who was already in bed. Before he began I asked for "something to eat." They tried to convince me that I was not famished and recited the menu of our supper. It was no use, I was "hungry." At last father yielded and brought me a slice of bread generously buttered.

After a bite or two, I asked if I might have a cracker or a doughnut instead. The in-

gratitude and interruption combined to bring upon me a vial of wrath and I "finished my bread," since the alternative was to "go hungry." In the morning it transpired that he had mistaken the lard for butter. He did not apologise, but was so pathetically compliant that I was very sorry for him and glad when we regained our normal status.

XXXIII

WE stumbled upon Father Prout last night, Amy and I. She did not put away the book until I could repeat: "I protest to heaven that were I, while wandering in the gloomy forest, to meet on my dreary path, the small faint glimmer of a glowworm, I should shudder at the thought of crushing with my foot that dim speck of brilliancy, and were it only for its being akin to brighter rays, honouring it for its relation to the stars, I would not harm the little lamplighter as I passed." Father Prout must have been blind or he would not have had that feeling for a bit of light.

They are all so busy and so happy! Amy is waiting for Mr. Kennedy as impatiently as if she were a little child. Her heart is so full it fairly bubbles over.

"How pretty you are, Oudene!" she said to-day. "Your grey hair is prettier than the gold ever was." I wonder that it did not look golden to her yet!

Mr. Nelson came just after she had gone and asked:

"What is that you are chanting, Mrs. De Lon?"

"Something lovely from Virgil," I replied.

"Tell me and see if I know it," he begged.

"I'll try," I laughed, "I have it by heart," and I put on a stage voice, and pounded on the ictus as we used to do at school: "Monstrum, horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen *ademptum!*" I ended triumphantly.

He had tried to stop me, but I said it through and was sorry the moment after, for he reproached me in a passion of pity and affection.

I hurt my friends a thousand times more than I do myself. I am cauterised, paralysed, benumbed, stolid, insensible as the South Sea Islander who chops off a toe that he may wear a pair of cast-off shoes that are too small for him.

"I am going to bed early," I said to Amy a little later.

"You are *not* going to bed early," she replied, and they all came out and sat on the porch and hemmed me in till the wee small hours — Bless their kind hearts!

Good-*night.*

XXXIV

I WAS glad to be interrupted last time. I was as bored as you were I am sure. I do not wonder you have stayed away. Amy said you were to be out of town.

Mr. Kennedy came a week ago and preparations go on apace. If they only would not insist on my going to the wedding! I told them they did not "need me for a witness," but they are very urgent. I wish I had had courage to say "No," at once. Amy does really care very much and so does Mr. Kennedy. He is not so busy as the rest—"until time for the rehearsal." He laughed when I asked how he had so much time to read to me.

When I begged him last night to help get me excused from going he was as obstinate as the rest.

"I won't go if you don't," he said and Amy said the same.

"Then be married here where I can sit behind my vines," I laughed, willing enough to shock poor Mr. Nelson.

"We could do that, couldn't we?" she replied.

"If the Bishop approved," Mr. Kennedy answered, doubtfully.

"Of course I'll go," I said to him later, "but since He has set darkness in my paths, I doubt his expecting me to walk in them very often."

"He has not made you halt as well as blind," he replied, "and he has promised to be a 'Lamp unto your pathway'!"

I did not think he knew his Bible so well, or thought that way about it. He spoke most reverently.

I ended weakly: "It is not pleasant to have people behold you when you have no idea by whom you are beholden."

There was a long pause before he asked:

"Do you study up things like that, Oudene, dear?" patting my hand just the least little bit. I jumped a little, for I thought something might have dropped on it — a spider did yesterday.

"Pardon me," he begged, and I ought to have explained but did not quickly enough — then it was too late.

I told him again how very, very glad I was that he had come, and that I was so glad for

Amy, and how happy she had been, and I was so sorry she had doubted for a moment my delight in her joy.

He seemed very happy about it, and he certainly appreciates Amy.

I told him many of my hopes for her future and some of my pet theories about married life. He fell in with them all and added some of his own I had not thought about. Even those dreadful Indian customs suggest some important and rather novel ideas.

Amy came then and wanted him to walk over to the church with her. When they were beyond my ear-sight I sat at first a trifle lonely, and then I remembered the spider and fell to thinking of all the little bugs walking up and down the vine stalks, and down among the roots of the grass. How much they know that we do not, and what important affairs two crickets may have to discuss when they meet by accident at one of their cross-roads. Did I read that or think it?

Think of the excitement of being an ant sent as a spy to some hostile camp or to bring home the body of a dead hero! What if you were a wounded fly and a great serpent came along as big as a knitting needle to

swallow you, or if you were a poor little snakelet just out of the egg that couldn't find its mother!

Truly, did you know that when a snake shed its skin, the old skin always separated about the eyes first and made it look as if it were blind?

I was never afraid of a deserted skin because the eyes were gone. Once at school Helen wrote a poem in place of a composition. It was about an empty snake-skin — a Pearly-Nautilus sort of thing with a dash of Yorick in it — and very absurd.

I remember someone spoke of deer shedding their horns and Will Abbot had "never heard of such a thing." We told him all about it "honest and true" and he listened respectfully.

"Do they shed their tails too?" he asked.

A footnote once said that when some very old graves were opened and exploited in England somewhere, there were no eye-holes in the skulls. There were some strange surmises as to what sort of people they had been — or hadn't. The old sexton explained it to them by saying that dead people almost always turned over in their coffins. Sure enough, the eye-holes were underneath all right.

Everyone was so glad to know they had not been blind.

Cupid and I were talking about Hymen. Cupid feels discouraged at the way he is likely to turn out. When they were younger Hymen seemed to be as bright as any of the family.

"I don't know why he is getting to be so unpopular," he went on. "He is the most conscientious urchin in all God-dom. I think it is because he can see. He is charged with showing partiality and all that foolishness."

I suggested that he was too conservative and Cupid caught it up!

"He never was one of the wide-awake, progressive kind. He stuck to old-fashioned notions, said "let well enough alone" and "rolling stones gathered no moss."

There always will be one in a big family like theirs who falls behind. It is usually the younger ones. The brains run out.

Of course, too, there was considerable conflict between his vocation or avocation and Cupid's. He tried to interfere in the cases Cupid had taken up, and Cupid did not like that. He complains too that when he starts in with a case Cupid will not help him on.

He does, though. I heard him laughing

down under the rose-bush one day, and he explained that he had been shooting an old curmudgeon over in Balton who had been tyrannizing over a loving little wife for ten years. When I hoped that he had pulled the arrow out of her to do it with, so that he might know what it was *not* to be loved, he became quite serious and said he believed I was as wicked as he.

He "wanted to do that very thing" but said it would be misery and Hades to be loved by such a creature if one had not love to make her blind to his *un*loveliness. He did not want her last end to be worse than the first.

"At least," he said, playing a little tune on his bowstring, "he'll be miserable with jealousy. He'll never see her look toward a man without suspecting her of having that in her eyes which he has seen in other women's."

Oh, my dear! How good you are to come down for a bedtime chat. Helen and Amy are packing for the little journey which I beg them not to make too short.

Mr. Nelson came and sat with me, until

the Bishop walked by and asked him to come for a walk to the Falls by moonlight.

Mr. Kennedy talked as quietly to me about our India as if to-morrow were just a common day. Yet he is the last man one would suspect of being insensible or blasé or nonchalant even. I cannot imagine him with the usual masculine contempt for sentiment, and I am sure he's too genuine to be bored.

He is the only one that never cringes at mention of eyes, unless I do it myself, like a mental degenerate.

I told him to-night that I was trying to think out a list of Monoculars; a few of us thought of a by-law to make them honourary members, like the ex-blinds.

There is such a list of monoculars! All the Virtues seem to be among them, but we have not thought of any vices. We take the conventional classification.

We hear of the eye of Truth, and the eye of Reason, in the grandest of our hymns!

We even sail into the Wind's eye and worry about the view that may be taken of our troubles by the "eye of the Law."

I don't mention the eye of Faith because she's blind. That's only a figure of speech.

I am so sorry you are not to be here for the wedding. Amy suspects, dear, that you prefer not to be. Do weddings seem oppressively sad to you still?

How lovely that honey-suckle is!

When I woke this morning and the fragrance filled the room, I thought of Victor Hugo, and loved him for saying that every plant was a lamp and its perfume was its light.

It helped me to excuse my ecstasy in fragrance, which I feared was sensuous.

XXXV

OH, my dear! my dear! Where have you been these days when I needed you most?

No, I did not wish for you, but I needed you. How could you let me go on so blindly?

Amy has told you! Never mind if she has told you a thousand times, I am going to tell you myself. She can't show you it from my point of view. When she realised it all she just threw herself on her knees and hugged me and laughed and then cried and brought Mr. Nelson to help her do both. Why didn't you tell her what a wild goose chase my thoughts were on? She would have put me right in a moment.

You never suspected? You *must* have suspected. I have you both to forgive — sometime.

I'm glad now that you weren't at the wedding. Amy took more pains with my toilet than she did with her own. She made me

wear roses, though I insisted upon some pressed autumn leaves, scarlet ones, which are really brighter than roses. Then I remembered "the perfume of the flowers is its flame" and let her pin on the roses to give me light.

Mr. Kennedy put on my shawl, and when I thanked him, asked:

"Isn't it Alfred, yet?"

Just the least suspicion of accent on the "yet" grated a bit, but I said bravely:

"Alfred, henceforth, of course."

"And Oudene?"

"Yes, Oudene." He has called me that once or twice but has forgotten, and I am glad to know that he has.

Mr. Nelson gave me his arm to the church, and I knew how beautiful the tender leaves and mossy trunks were, and the little church with its vines whose rosy baby fingers were spread out to clutch the grey stone. He took me into the vestry and they all helped me to my seat in the shadow of the screen.

After a long delay, while I heard the friendly people filling the church to its doors, there was a rustle — the organ changed. "Oh, Jack!" I groaned within myself — a door opened. I caught the swish of muffled

skirts — a hush came over all, the Bishop's voice was drowned by the rushing thoughts — I prayed for my precious sister — until I heard the words:

"I, Edward, take thee, Amy"—

"I, Edward, take thee, Amy"—

I do not know what happened. I did not cry out that there was a mistake, that I knew why *that* man and woman should not be joined together. It was too late: I was already committed forever to hold my peace. It was so dreadful that I had to cry — so absurd I had to laugh.

When had they made the change, I thought next. Within three days Amy had been going on about Mr. Kennedy as only a bride could do. Helen talked only about him! — and you!

We have all and always loved Mr. Nelson. I did not notice anything unusual in what was said of him.

I got myself in hand before they came to me and they never suspected how disappointed I had been.

We were sure of Mr. Nelson anyway — don't you see. We did not need to marry him to keep him with us. Now Mr. Kennedy may go anytime and break up our party.

The Bishop gave me his arm and we went into the empty church after it was over, and walked about while I explained to him the various interesting "stations."

The brass for father is new since he was here, and says boldly that he did not Succeed Apostolically.

We walked home just as the sky must have been aflame with glory.

The Bishop quoted, and I begged him to repeat, which he said was quite an unusual compliment to the clergy:

"By the firmament of clouds the purple veil is closed at evening, round the sanctuary of his rest."

"He rejoices as a bridegroom," he added reverently, "to draw the splendour of his curtain behind him."

I don't know how we got through the breakfast that day — wedding guests always seem to have been fasting.

"Oudene," Helen exclaimed, "you are actually hilarious." And Mr. Nelson — I don't know when I shall learn to call him Edward — said reproachfully:

"She is her own dear self again, Mrs. Sutton."

When Amy was properly doffed and donned and there were threats of rice, and rumble of wheels, the child ran out to me and threw her arms about my neck, sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Dear, *dear* Oudene," she whispered, "I've seen through it all. You have worn your old bright look and been your own gay self just for me. I did not mean to force you to such an effort, dear. How can I leave you a whole week?"

"Oh, Amy," I groaned, "don't pity *me*. You are all of you stiff, stock, stone, sand, gravel, *pur*blind! All my months' prayers have *gang agley*. I wish I had not prayed for you at all!"

"What do you mean?" she had been begging. "What *do* you mean, Oudene?"

"You — you've married the wrong man," I half whispered and half sobbed — not wanting the rest to know. "You've cheated me, defrauded me of my proper brother-in-law."

"Oh, my Oudene," she cried, "I never dreamed."

"It was not necessary," I interrupted, "I did the dreaming,"— and then we both laughed — and cried too.

"How could you think," she began,—

"Because I had to see with my ears," I said. "My fingers were all thumbs as far as eyes were concerned."

"Did you fancy I was to endow Abram with all my worldly goods?" she enquired.

"Don't, Amy," I begged. "You have all talked of no one but Mr. Kennedy these months past."

"Sh," she whispered, with another hug, "they're coming for me. How can I leave you so? Mr. Kennedy!"

There was kissing, laughter, confusion and I whispered, "Don't betray me, dear."

I needed the next hour of quiet and was gratified to be left alone.

How could I have gotten myself into a position so dreadfully, so hopelessly absurd! I had not thought my way out of it when they came back from the station — Helen and Mr. Kennedy. It was early still, they said, and they entertained me most diligently for an hour or so.

Helen talked about Newton and Mr. Kennedy of India, but I was not half attending, and finally they said good-night — though Helen offered to stay.

I had a long think after that. You may be sure I needed one.

Some of the Club friends passed and spoke, but I did not ask them to stop.

When Mary came I went to bed obediently, but I could not sleep. After the frogs and tree-toads and all the rest became quiet the time dragged on and on. At last when I thought it must be almost light I got up very quietly and crept out to the verandah. I did not want to walk there for fear my steps would waken Mary, so I went down under the pear trees and walked up and down a couple of hours.

When I was tired and thought I could get a nap on the lounge I was coming back, feeling my way, panic-stricken all of a sudden, when I'd not once thought of fear before. Suddenly a surprised voice called:

"Qui vive?"

I knew it was Mr. Kennedy, and before I stopped to ask what he was doing out there in the middle of the night, I replied:

"I am the Cat, that Walks in the Dark, in the Wet Wild Woods, by my Wild lone, and all places are alike to me."

"Well," he replied, taking my hand, "the wet wild cat had better come in from the wet wild woods or she will catch cold. It

rained in the night. Has she been to breakfast?

My dear! it was half past eight o'clock. There had been a heavy thunderstorm in the night. Mary had heard Johnny Anson running over for the doctor about three o'clock; she knew the baby must be worse and Amy gone; — so had dressed and come in to tell me that she was going, but found me sleeping so soundly that she would not waken me; the postman had brought the letters and slammed the door as usual; the very birds were singing, and strangest of all Abram had said to Mr. Kennedy:

"I saw Miss Oudene," (he never remembers about Jack) "go down the path about ten minutes ago, sir."

Surely all times are alike to me! I can see that a thousand years might be as one day.

Was it yesterday that I wore white aprons which covered me all up, and pushed my hair all straight back with a round comb,— or *was* it a thousand years ago? — Or some other *I?*

XXXVI

I WANT you all day to-day, the rest are so busy.

Vathek was an interesting man. He had a wonderful palace, Mr. Kennedy says. I try to fancy what was in it, pictures I suppose. They are wonderfully adapted to the eye. Sculpture is more for us. I wonder if, in art galleries, they might not reserve the sculpture rooms for the blind on one day of the week? The statues could be washed afterwards — or fumigated — or stay dirty like gods. Forgive me — that was petty!

. . . Yes, but we are to pluck it out if it offends *us* — not others. I wonder if the right eye is as much more useful than the left, as the right hand. There would not be much choice between the right and left foot. Telephones are developing left ears, I presume. Do you suppose we say the left hand because the right one was always the one to be cut off as a punishment? When their dead are laid in the Towers of Silence the Parsees set a

watch to see which eye the vultures take first.

Amy said once she believed I idolised the James' baby — just because I like to have something warm in my arms. I assured her my idolatrous days were over. One can't have an idol unless one can see it. The very word means a thing that can be seen. Thanks to Carlyle for that bit of comfort!

Amy is coming to-night — she wrote Helen, who has been busy with Mary all day getting things ready.

Mr. Kennedy asked if he might read to me this forenoon. "What in?" I asked, and to my surprise he said, "The Bible."

I never let him know how much I enjoy his reading because he might feel it his duty to offer to do it. He reads slowly, and without the least emphasis. It is almost as if I were reading myself and getting the pure word without any meaning pinned to it. There is more temptation to stop and discuss because the sense of it is not already settled before I get a chance at it. The consequence is that we discuss a great deal more than we read.

This time he happened to read about Paul,

and I stopped him after a while to ask if he thought chronic blindness was Paul's thorn in the flesh. It had not occurred to him, but, as we had quite an argument as to Paul's eligibility in the Club, I was pretty well posted. I could not remember our particular proof text, but as he read on he came to it:

"For I bear you record that, if it had been possible ye — would — have — plucked — out — your — own — eyes — and — have — given — them — to — me."

"There!" I said, "what would he want of their eyes if he had a supply of his own? Why didn't they offer him hands or feet — or tongues, if he only stuttered?"

"But he wrote his epistles 'with his own hand,'" he insisted.

"Yes," I retorted, "see what big letters I make when I do write with my own hand! Blind people can sign their own names when they have had time for practice."

Evidently an amanuensis wrote for him usually.

"What did we decide?" I'm ashamed to say how he ended me. If I'd thought of it before I might have had an answer. He asked:

"Why did he boast that he could '*lead*

about a wife'? If he had been blind she would have had to lead him."

I don't know now how I came to do it. Don't you know the little glow of nervous excitement that comes from a pass at words, especially when you admit your opponent's skill? Well, just on the spur of the moment I told him about our blind Club — which I never in the world meant anyone should know but you — not even Amy. It's a kind of *Secret Society,* you know.

I was sorry the moment I had done it, and the little excitement of surprising and amusing him was past, but I was embarrassed to find myself saying "Sh" when we heard Helen coming.

She would consider it the most absurd thing in the world and think I was whining and "puling for my eyes" like Ovid, if she knew how much my thoughts ran on the subject — don't you see.

As soon as ever Amy comes I'm going to have her tell Mr. Kennedy about my misunderstanding. I do not know what she said when she wrote him — to come, you know.

XXXVII

YES, Amy came and I almost forgot my troubles in her happiness. She told me all about the journey, and the arrival, and the stay, and the plans for return, and the people she watched, and the landscapes. It was only when she went the least little bit too much into detail, that I suspected her of trying to amuse *me*.

There was not so much about "Edward" as one might have expected. By the way, *he* never begged me to call him Edward, and never calls me Oudene. I am glad Mr. Kennedy never insisted upon it, perhaps because I did not remember.

Helen called him "Alfred" the other day. She told me later that if he was going to settle down here — now that he's really purchased the Appleton place — we might as well be neighbourly. *She* seems to have forgotten it.

While Helen and Amy were upstairs, I sat on the porch, and Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Nelson smoked on the lawn.

It is strange how soon a man can forget that he is married. After a question or two, Mr. Nelson went into politics and then into his plans for church work.

I was thinking of other things, and how I should find an opportune time to tell Amy what I wished, when I heard Mr. Kennedy say, very seriously:

"Yes, old man, it is time I came into the church and I'm going to do it. I got tangled up with those old heathen notions till I was blind as a bat."

There was an uneasy motion and a pause before Mr. Nelson said:

"It's the only thing a man can do."

"Yes," was the reply, "and it's the manliest thing a man can do."

"I suppose you have read over the Church Symbols?" Mr. Nelson suggested.

"Yes, and the thirty-nine articles and the Athanasian creed."

"You don't have to accept them *in toto*," Mr. Nelson laughed.

"But I do!" was the answer. "I'm like Captain Bell's very sensible wife who said she didn't want a *worm!*" lowering his voice, "I want a diet that will produce bone. It's the whole creed or none — for me."

"Well, you are an old fogy!" Mr. Nelson exclaimed.

"Yes," he answered, "but I got most of my old-fogyism out of heathen books. There is an old Mohametan book on the "Being of God" that did me an ocean of good. I shall stick to that as long as I do to my Bible."

"Who wrote it?" asked Mr. Nelson.

"A fellow named Fenelon," he answered.

Yes, I was sure she told Mr. Nelson, so sure that I begged him to tell Mr. Kennedy in some roundabout way — since Amy insisted she could not:

"Because I promised you I wouldn't," she laughed.

He refused as stoutly as she, as if he had to obey her already — or were bound by her promises.

"But someone must," I said to Amy. "He thinks *I* sent for him — wanted him."

"He is much happier thinking it," she replied in the most exasperatingly indifferent way, as if she were watching a play.

"I wanted him for you," I insisted.

"Edward didn't," she laughed.

"I'll tell him myself, just how it was."

"I thought you'd have done that already," — with another laugh.

"What must he think of me!" I finally said in despair.

"He looks as if he were thinking some gloomy things about himself, Oudene. It's not his fault, whose ever it is."

I don't dare ask Helen to tell him. She would do it as if it were all a joke. Some things can't be laughed off. Besides, she doesn't know.

She was here for supper last night, and I listened to the chatter. She chattered and the others conversed.

You remember Ruskin says there are twelve who can talk, to one that can think, and a hundred who can think to one who can see.

I have been comparing my friends and sorting out those who can think, and those who can see — those to whom the internal visions are the substance of things conceived.

With what energy Homer must have thought to make us see his creatures — the things he created! And with what infinite energy must God have thought, to bring into existence the beings he had conceived and said, "Let us make." I wonder if the difference is only a question of degree. Think of

the barren surroundings of writers who have conjured up the most wonderful scenes.

"The imagination seems to see better," said Amy, "when the physical eye is not fatigued."

"Yes," Mr. Nelson added, "the imagination can't get the brain when the line is in use."

Mr. Kennedy really has wonderful insight. He thinks of all sorts of things that had not entered into my philosophy.

He comes every day since Amy returned, though I certainly need entertainment less. He spends more time with her than with me, and misses her as much as I do when she has to be away.

XXXVIII

YES, I know, my dear. We are neglecting my autobiography, and I'm not seven years old yet! How long do you think by rule of three, it will take us to finish? I mean to spin it out until I am able to include my own death and burial, like Moses.

What was that Amy read this morning? She has taken to giving me a few minutes French every day. She pronounces beautifully; I could understand it better if she pronounced it as I do myself.

It was about man, "blind and curious, rathering to fear than to be ignorant."

I have to translate to myself as she goes along, so I can not pick my words and keep up. The "blind and curious" struck me as an unfortunate combination, which would tend to impatience and sundry other unloveable qualities. And then that we should rather fear — worry, suffer in any way — than to be ignorant! It sounds Eve-like and feminine.

Helen came in then, and Mr. Kennedy, and we launched off on a go-as-you-please theological debate.

I won't bore you with it, or you will threaten to take an earlier boat even than you plan. How I shall miss you!

When they struck fatalism and free-will I protested:

"Sam Lawton and I had that threshed out long ago. The subject is taboo in peaceful social circles."

So it was obediently dropped. I confided to Mr. Kennedy later that half my happiness comes from believing nice little things which happen to me are fore-ordained.

"What about the dreadful things?" he asked.

"I could not bear them at all if I did not know that they were planned for me by someone who loved me and knew best," I replied. It seems he has exactly the same feeling about it. It is fortunate we like it, for we could not make it different if we would, and, he quoted, as he said good-night, "Life ain't in holdin' a good hand, but playin' a poor hand well."

XXXIX

"IF you keep thinking of one and the same thing long enough you will be off to sleep at night and not lie awake." That is what one can truly call wisdom!

If you think of different things and your mind buzzes like a blue-bottle fly in the upper corner of a window pane, you may not fall asleep directly; if it hops about from one subject to another like a kangaroo or even a jirboa, then you "should not let it," and when it goes like a popper full of corn, you lie awake, and "it serves you right."

That is the way one's friends explain how one "may go directly to sleep"— which I did not last night.

When I finally fell to thinking of colours and settled down to it, I fell asleep. I love colour so that it seems all my own. If God had handed the spectrum down to me, as he is handing the rainbow to Noah from a window in Heaven in the church in Monte Reale, Noah reaching up to take hold of the other

end of it, it would not seem any more my very own. There was my sunset last night. It was far more permanent than any sunset you may have seen, for I returned to it again and again and merged in it all the spires and pinnacles, the pagodas and minarets I have ever seen, and coloured them like the New Jerusalem.

You come at such long intervals now I am losing all count of what I have told you or where I meant to begin. You have been very, very kind to come so much and to come at all now you are so busy. I can never tell you or show you in any way how you have helped me. I never feel as if I were telling things when I tell you, dear. Some people give us such a blissful feeling of fidelity that we become irresponsible.

Yes, Amy is gone for a whole day.

Mr. Nelson sat with me a while and came out to lunch with me, which I've never asked anyone to do before. I even poured his tea — promising not to put my finger in to feel when the cup was full, as old Mrs. Williams did when she poured for Dr. Johnson, though the Doctor probably could not see her, and would not have minded if he had.

Mr. Nelson's regard for Mr. Kennedy is almost idolatrous. He talks about his virtues as if he were brooding over one and then another of the facets of an emerald. There comes a tremour in his voice so deep that one marvels that he should so torture himself!

For my part I do not admire Mr. Kennedy so much as I admire Mr. Nelson's Damon-and-Jonathan devotion. I told Amy I thought, "Edward" overrated his Pythias absurdly. I never heard her express such extravagant admiration for any of her rejected suitors — though I'm not sure about that — as she did for Mr. Kennedy then, but it was in rebuttal, and she was over-loyal to her husband, who has not quite settled into his normal status.

XL

YES, Mr. Kennedy was confirmed yesterday. Amy and Mr. Nelson were so happy; Mrs. Wallace, too, the poor creature I forgot to tell you about. She does not really deserve the Mrs. and is going to drop it. Her name went on the record as Mary Anne Wallace.

"She is surely one of the 'blessed poor in spirit' and perhaps sees more than I," Mr. Kennedy said.

The night before the Vestry met I heard bits of another Good-night talk as Mr. Nelson and he paced the walk, thinking I could not hear. I could not, except as they approached at intervals. At one turn I caught the question:

"Sakya Muni rather 'fussed your mind,' didn't he?" quoting from dear little Edith, who amuses us so.

"N-o," was the long drawn answer, "Buddha was a great man, remarkably enlightened as his name implies. I'll take off

my hat to him any time, and my shoes to Mohamet, but I bend my knee to — Another."

At the next turn:

"We need your kind of fellows," Mr. Nelson said, with a more familiar tone than usual. He seems never quite to forget the difference in age.

"That's not exactly my — point of view, as Mrs. De Lon would say —" he lowered his voice, and I got a whiff from an India cigar. "It's a question about us, whether we shall feel much like heroes after the fight if we just stand and look on."

"Then — there's the pension," he ended, with a deprecatory laugh.

Helen has received a handful of letters from old Captain Eastman since I saw you, my dear. He complains, in one bit she read us, of the "long, long days." How can anyone do that!

When Helen was embroidering the other day her silk knotted and she was actually annoyed to the point of exclamation. I told her my beans never got into snarls and what do you think! She burst into tears and had to be comforted. She really is nervous of late

and worries us — with the captain so far away.

Mr. Kennedy came in, fortunately, and we begged for some India.

"What shall I tell you about?" he asked.

"Anything," Helen laughed, "but the Taj Mahal and Towers of Silence."

"I'm not likely to describe the Taj," he said, "and I was never in the Towers of Silence."

I think Helen rather upset me, for when Amy came in and asked what the Japanese meant by calling their new era Meijie, and she could not quite understand the force of their "Enlightenment," I told her that "Enlighten" was the opposite of "De-lighten."

I thought of that pun weeks ago and made up my mind I would not let anyone, ever, hear me use it. A dozen times I have bitten my tongue to hold it back, for I knew it would hurt them — and now I have said it! Amy's question was an unforeseen temptation and out it came, as baby adders come out of their mothers' mouths when the danger is past. How cross I am!

I wish you had not come to-day at all.

XLI

OH, my dear, can you ever, ever, forgive me? I have meant every day to beg Helen or Amy to come to you and tell you I was so sorry! But how could I tell them what I had said to you? — or make them understand without?

I have needed you very much too, dear, for I have a new little worry that I have hugged under my blouse till it has gnawed me like the Spartan fox.

Have you heard any hint as to when the Captain *is* coming — or when Helen is to join him?

Yes, I do think she needs him. Any wife needs her husband, and she is so — what shall I say? An English friend wrote me once after a sea-voyage that she hated the water lately because she could not abide " your frisky American matrons," she put it. I never for one moment entertained the least doubt of Helen's —

No, good taste, I was going to say.

I don't wonder you are surprised and I am relieved that you are — very much relieved.

Yes, I'll tell you all about it — and shame to me!

It is another of those intermittent, terminal conversations I have overheard. Mr. Nelson can't do anything about it for he is practically as helplessly stultified as a priest who hears confession. He can't betray such a confidence and the least attempt to help would be betrayal.

You must help me to help, or Amy must help us both. And mind, dear, it never entered into the "thought of the imagination of my heart" to suspect even an understanding look between them; but a conscious attraction is a calamity for them both.

Yes, I won't keep you in suspense. As they approached Mr. Kennedy was saying —

"Mrs. Sutton has been the best friend I ever had. She wrote me every two or three years and I lived on those letters between times. No one knew, of course."

As they came back he was saying:

"She promised that if ever the time came when I could be of use to her — or even could be near her, in a friendly way, she would let me know."

"Did she?" Mr. Nelson asked, and the next words were:

"We had no code but when she cabled '*At last*' I understood."

Again, as they came up Mr. Nelson was asking:

"When was that?"

"Two years ago next Tuesday at eight A. M. Calcutta time I received it." There was a laugh as he said it so exactly, that grated as no word or laugh of his ever did before. It did not seem as if he could be our Mr. Kennedy — the Mr. Kennedy I thought I knew — don't you see.

The next round they were both silent, then:

"Did you start at once?" Mr. Nelson asked as a sort of a test.

"How could I, man!" he groaned. "The Indian sun had got in its work — I was in the hospital."

"What *did* you do?"

"Got the nurse to write for me and explain that I had waited twenty years for the chance and — wished I were dead."

I was not exactly sure of that last word.

"What next?" Mr. Nelson asked.

"Mrs. Sutton got the letter." He paused for Mr. Nelson's:

"And —?"

"She cabled —'Come.'"

"Good deal of responsibility for her to take —"

As they came back Mr. Kennedy was saying — I don't know of whom —"she's a six sided brick, clean edged —"

"You're glad you came?" was the next question.

"Man! I'm in heaven. Never was or expected to be so happy — just to be where I can talk to her —"

That was all.

What did I think? Several things. First, what if *I* had been a fool? Fortunately, there was no danger of that. Secondly, what if I had married him to Amy as I intended.

Thirdly? Well, thirdly, that I had such absolute faith in his honour, that it need not spoil our pleasant talks. I don't know that one need grudge a dog a bone like that, if he is a gentleman or even a *man*. I did wish Helen were a bit quieter and more matronly.

You must go? And no memories yet! I do not think so much of the past as I did — and you are going so soon that I should not

have time to finish. The thoughts of the old days will surge over me sometimes and I shall want you more than I can tell. Just now they seem eclipsed.

Good-night.

XLII

YES, they said to-day would be Sunday and I presume they knew. *I* couldn't help it.

I had to send for you, you were so long in coming and I had been so unjust.

My eyes have been holden, but I have not been intentionally blind.

They say there are fish that can see in salt but not in fresh water, because the latter contains no N-rays. Sometimes it seems to me there is some fault in the atmosphere which prevents my seeing, some rays are temporarily extracted from it and they call it blindness in *me*.

It may be no more my fault than it was Aeneus' when Venus wrapped him in clouds and made him invisible, only now she has not wrapped me but all the rest of you.

I am not a squid, that I should wantonly envelope myself in opaque blackness, and yet at times I almost seem to have done so.

The second night after you came last, we

all talked an hour or so, then Amy and Mr. Nelson walked away to take Mr. Kennedy home, they said.

Helen sat by me, and seemed preoccupied until I despaired of entertaining her. We had been silent so long we heard them coming back, when suddenly she kneeled by me with her head on my shoulder and said:

"Oh, Oudene, he loves you so!"

I fairly felt my heart stop!

"Loves *me?*" I asked.

"Yes, all his life long!"

It seemed so impossible after a moment that I shook myself free and saw how absurd it was. She has not referred to it again, nor I, of course. But I see now how unjust I have been to her. Nothing could make me doubt that she believed what she had said to me. I cannot beg her pardon and I cannot take back what I said. You and God will forgive me.

I have been thinking backward and I am ashamed of the little brusquenesses to Mr. Kennedy which I have allowed myself whenever I happened to remember that I had seemed to send for him.

I was relieved to find out long after that he did not come home at all on account of Amy's

letter. It seems his business in Paris was finished and he had gone to Cook's office to engage passage when he found her letter. He wanted to get over before the fogs were too heavy.

I spoke about it accidentally to-day and her answer was a bit significant:

"I'm glad," she said, "that I worded my letter just as I did. If Mr. Kennedy had known that you expected him to come and marry me, and were so happy about it, he would have been very *un*happy — to disappoint you."

I overheard him talking to Abram on the lawn to-night, asking why he had no wife:

"Weel," Abram began, as if he had the day before him, "ye see, my sister — she's older than me — she got married and when she had three little 'uns, her man he went off and left her set."

After a slash or two with his sickle:

"I had to look after the four of them, and I didn't know, sir, if I'd want to stay by, if *I* got married."

"You were wise then that you tried no experiments," Mr. Kennedy went on. "You look a happy man as you are."

"That I'm not, sir, that I'm not," was the cheerful answer.

Mr. Kennedy told me about it later and was sorry for poor old Abram. Pity was so absurdly wasted on him that I remonstrated.

"Cupid has not done right by Abram," he insisted, "everyone has a right to demand one arrow."

How foolish I was to remember *L'Homme Qui Rit* and to ask Amy and Helen to read to me. I had half remembered the blind baby, dragged naked from her frozen mother's breast, and carried by Gwynplaine to light and warmth and food and love — who grew up to be "a sweet light-bearer."

One sentence, after the book was shut, made me forget Dea and Ursus and Homo, the dog, thinking only:

"God is the arm, Chance the sling, Man the pebble. How are you to resist, once flung?"

"Once flung!" I did not believe Chance was the sling but I knew that I had been flung — far into space; that I was whirling, falling in response to some divine law of gravitation. That there was just some subtle, slight, chemical change in life — mi-

nute, inevitable, irrevocable; as if the oxygen and nitrogen of the air should slip a cog and unite to form a compound; as little a thing as that!

I do not know why I try to put this into words. It was not a thought, not a feeling, only a what-if — but it was the invisible life in the embryo while the bud is still unformed. Such a what-if, conscious or unconscious, might be a woman's Rubicon.

As Mr. Kennedy went out of the gate yesterday — no, the day before — he let in Mary Anne Wallace, coming to see Amy about her sick boy. His courteous salutation — why should it have caught my attention and held it so? — made me compare him with other men.

I am foolish to wonder when I left the sling, but I verily believe it was when I heard the courtesy of that greeting and contrasted involuntarily his life and hers.

I was not watching even with my mind — which might have kept me blind. It was one of the off-glances that reveal what is not in sight.

I was long awake after my ceremonious retirement, which Amy will attend and over-

see. When I slept at last, a great Goblin came and said "Jack was the Sling."

I awoke, the most miserable of creatures, breakfasted in bed and pretended to sleep on and on.

At noon I said I would dress, but when I attempted it I found I was really ill, which I had not suspected.

Dr. Barton happened to call to see Mr. Nelson at night and they brought him up to tell me how Helen had sprained her ankle.

I spent the evening quite alone except when Amy ran up once or twice contrary to my commands. Listening to the voices below, which seemed suppressed and serious, the world seemed to me a happy place, as peaceful as Heaven could be.

I never was a pebble and God had never flung me.

Jack was as near — and as far as ever. The everlasting arm was not flinging me into space and away from Him, but was underneath, an everlasting support. If I could see, I should wish only for quiet and to shut my eyes and think.

XLIII

I HAVE been travelling all day. You remember Thoreau "travelled a great journey in Concord"? I have travelled as far in my good chair. Sometimes my chair is a canoe; then I exchange it for an air-ship; when I am over-restless it is an Empire-Express.

I buy tickets to imaginary lands — Hesperia for instance — which are dated and stamped "Cimmeria." I have set out repeatedly for Altruria and paid big money for a ticket, but ships don't run on schedule time — or else I miss them.

"Do you think they need you there?" Mr. Kennedy asks, adding "It seems to me that we Cimmerians need you more."

We talked on, and before I knew it I was telling him one of my worries. It has followed me from childhood and if I were not a Christian, I mean a believer in the Bible, it would really make me unhappy.

It is, or would be, that after this life I

might be petrified in a certain state of mind or feeling — whatever it happened to be *in articulo mortis*. As if I should be "left set" just as I happened to be caught and stay so forever. That I should not have any consecutive memory, but one memory, a composite of all the separate memories of my life — their algebraic sum. Think of having no body, no mind; of being only a feeling, the legitimate resultant of this composite memory!

I never put it into words before and I did not then, have not now, but he understood.

I used to think of it as a little child. When I went to sleep at night I tried often to compose for myself a frame of mind which I should enjoy occupying forever and ever. I succeeded now and then quite to my own satisfaction and awoke hoping that I might be able to resume it when the proper time should come.

"Old people keep their shrouds folded away, and foreign statesmen carry their coffins when they travel abroad with the same thrifty fore-sight, and, I hope, with fewer misgivings," Mr. Kennedy added as his contribution.

"And haloes are supposed to be kept in stock," I laughed.

Amy is going to find that verse about our being prone to sin as the sparks fly upward.

It seems a strange simile, for sin seems headed downward in Christian nomenclature. The Persians say that water runs downward to find the Lord of Earth, and that flame ascends to find the Lord of Heaven. Both "speed them to their source."

"Light seems always struggling to escape, and loth to return," I said to Mr. Kennedy to-day.

"Naturally," he replied, "for light is temporary, incidental, the mere vibration of the normal and permanent element."

"But," I urged, "light will be permanent. There shall be no Night there."

"No," he assented, and then, "Because there will be no sun to set. One could not be blind who had no eyes!"

I think he loves the night as much as I. He never tires of telling me about the stars and clouds.

"Will there be no sunsets there?" I asked, and got no answer.

"Sometimes I feel," I went on, "as if some antipodal Joshua had halted the sun in his private Ajalon, utterly careless of me and my need."

"In other regions," he quoted, and I recognised his precious Novalis, "In other regions light has pitched its joyous tents. What if it should never return to its children who wait for it in the faith of innocence?"

"We should be safe folded," I said, after a pause, "in the 'blanket of the Dark.'"

"'Dost thou take pleasure in us, dusky Night?'" he added, and when I begged him to go on — thinking it was a bit he had been saving for me —

"What holdest thou under thy mantle — Precious balm drops from thy hand out of its bundle of poppies. Thou up-liftest the heavy laden pinions of the soul — How poor and childish a thing seems now to me the Light."

As if to leave me without marring the thought, he went with only a muttered "Goodnight."

An hour later he was pacing the walk with Mr. Nelson and — I did not try not to hear, being sure he would not mind my hearing! Still, I did not listen.

"Where were you," asked Mr. Nelson, "and what were you doing when Oudene and Jack were in India? They wrote you they were coming?"

"Yes," was the reply, "and I ran like a

coward, though, by George-and-the-curly-tailed dragon, I had to screw up my courage to do it."

Mr. Nelson whistled softly. As they returned:

"Ran to Peshawar, then sneaked back to Amritzar; stalked them to Ajmir and Jaipur —"

"Catch them?"

"No, they sailed the day before I got to Bombay. I would have tossed two lacs into the Arabian Sea to have turned that ship's head round."

I called as they came back.

"Edward!"

"Yes, Oudene," he answered.

"You are walking too long. Come and sit with me." I was willing they should see how easily I could hear.

"Yes, after two turns more, our cigars are almost out," to which I assented, perforce.

"When did you first learn — about Oudene?" Mr. Nelson was asking next.

"Met Helen in Trieste." After a pause:

"It must have been a great shock —" No answer, and he went on:

"Were you — could you be sorry?"

"Yes, man!" was the emphatic answer.

"I'll do myself that justice. I'd have stayed in India to spare her."

"And never let her know?"

"Never let her know."

No one but Helen knows that I know, and she does not know how much I know, or how well I know it.

After the first surprise, I am very happy. There is none of the tumult and agony of doubt that comes with wooing — if only for one's own unworthiness.

I am not asked to give — or even to accept. I have only to live on — dreaming my dreams and seeing my visions, with another to share and enrich them.

Amy says he has his house quite in order and that his queer Indian servant is in charge — a Christian.

Do you go next week to New York? and sail on Saturday. And will you come to me every day till then? I don't know that I need you more, but I want you.

XLIV

"WHAT have *you* been doing all the morning?" I asked mockingly this noon when Mr. Kennedy came down to speak to Abram, and asked if I had been unsnarling all the morning?

"I? I've been turning my prayer wheel," he laughed.

Has he shown it to you? I saw them in Darjeeling but would not try one, unsterilised. I have been so sorry I hadn't one and never remembered that he might have brought some home.

"Oh," I begged, "haven't you two of them?"

"A dozen — or less" was the answer. "You shall have your choice — or all — but one. I cannot part with the very last. It is an aid to my devotions."

"'Devotion' has no plural," I corrected.

"Yes it has — a duel," he insisted.

Sometimes I half suspect that he suspects that I suspect — I'm getting as rattle headed as Helen!

"I'll send Thomas for them directly," he promised.

"Can you translate the prayer for me?" I asked.

"No," he answered, "but Thomas will."

"I had better not use it until I know what it means," said I. "And what god will be supposed to hear it?"

"The only God," he answered, in a tone that surprised and almost rebuked me.

I chose a wheel with a worn handle which shows it has been long and well used, and a cover that shuts on tight to the end of the cylinder which contains the prayer, so it will not fly off and leave me twirling the handle, with its stiff wire, while cover and prayer and cylinder roll in three directions.

Yes, the Bishop came yesterday — that was Wednesday? — He will have the service Sunday and has some project to talk over with Mr. Nelson.

What was I doing yesterday? Thinking about the Englishman who had the happy faculty I lack. "I comes to church o' Sundays," he said, "and sets me down, and lays me legs up, and thinks o' nothing."

I would give my two eyes for his ability to

think o' nothing, even now. My mill, like that of Samson, blind in Gaza, must have grist, and when that fails I must pour in the flour and grind it over — which clogs the mill.

We had a gay evening, though. My little tray was brought out to me, but I could hear all the table-talk and turn my prayer-wheel — and receive calls from my Club-mates between courses.

I heard Helen expounding Ruskin's theory that we destroy our sight in childhood, or dissipate it by straining our inward vision to see fairies and brownies, if not hob-goblins and spooks.

"If we attended properly to out-side eyes" — I knew she was coming to grief —"and let the 'unseen things' remain unseen we should be more likely —" hesitating —"to see the things we see!" she ended triumphantly.

They all laughed, and maybe I only imagined a "Sh — Oudene" behind her.

When they had led Mr. Kennedy on to talk of his "exile" as he called it and his longing for home, the subject of homesickness being up, Amy quoted:

"All sorrow should be homesickness."

After a pause, Mr. Kennedy spoke:

"You know," he said, "that hares could not live in Ithaca, and that those taken over to stock the island were all found dead on the shore toward Greece?"

We did not say we did not know it, and he added:

"The western coast of India is lined with English graves."

"Brides ought to drink of the Fountain of Youth," said the Bishop. I wondered if he found Amy changed.

"Can you direct me to it?" she asked.

"That is an awkward question," he answered laughing.

"I can direct you," Mr. Kennedy volunteered.

"You look well preserved," remarked Mr. Nelson.

"Yes," he said stoutly, "I've been to Mimir's Spring, which is the true fountain of youth."

"Did you drink?" asked Amy.

"No, I did not drink," he answered seriously.

"Why not?" they asked in chorus.

"Well," he hesitated, "they demanded of

me as of Alfadir before me that I leave them a pledge."

"Of what?" asked the Bishop.

"My left eye."

XLV

MR. NELSON spoke recently of poor Dr. Worcester, who became blind after he had finished his dictionary. I asked if Dr. Johnson's impaired sight was ever attributed to his labours on his dictionary. I never made a dictionary, but sometimes I think I may have injured my sight with my foolish ignorant searching of them.

Mr. Kennedy and I had been talking about creeds.

Someone had come across the child's definition of faith —" that it is believing what isn't true."

I jumped to the conclusion that she would define doubt, when she was old enough to know what it meant, as " not believing what is true."

" Faith is knitting," suggested Amy, " and doubt is ravelling out. One prefers to knit."

I get confused —" fussed in my mind "— We are so grateful to little Edith for the right word!

I must quote Bossuet to Faith the next time I see her: "Une insensée confiance, s'est jetter dans l'aveuglement."

Faith can't quite see why virtues should be blind, and just for foolishness I asked if she was still convinced that faith was a virtue. She said:

There is one strange phenomenon — I'm glad I have forgotten the derivation of that word — namely, that: "Blind unbelief is *sure* to err," though the italics are mine, while blind faith often leads one along safely.

Yes, of course one may have too much faith. All human faith is out of plumb — and any leaning tower may be too tall. One good thing — if it falls, the material is all there and one may rebuild at once. I know people who rebuild periodically and the faster they build the more the tower leans, and the sooner they may shift and try again — as Kim, when he wants to crack a hard bone, has to try every spot in the yard before he succeeds.

Sometimes a little clique of people builds its various towers about a common point toward whose centre they all lean. Exhortation, mutually exchanged, helps them to build at the same rate, so that when they fall they support each other and form a shrine or

stable for their hobby, which thrives and fattens — waxes fat and kicks, disastrously at times.

Yes, dear, I'm resigned, but you really are not called upon to admire the degree or quality of my resignation.

Some are born resigned, some acquire resignation and some have resignation thrust upon them. I belong to the third class, and am trying to add to my resignation that "jollity of the mind" that old Dr. Hobbes recommends and no doubt attained — if we may judge from his well-known frivolity.

Perhaps I need to be weaned from the world — to whose dugs I clung more fretfully than I knew. Blindness is only the drop of bitter on the nipple which makes one roll the head away with a sob.

XLVI

MR. KENNEDY'S patience is his most wonderful gift. He could not have cultivated it. When I get hold of an idea I like to follow, follow, foolishly on. And he never seems to tire.

A text of Scripture, any scripture, is like a nest of East India boxes, or straw card-cases. Every time one reads it — no, not every time, but from time to time as one re-reads it another wrapping comes off, and one gets nearer to the inner kernel which eternity may reveal to us in the nude.

What was I saying? You see, thinking, professional thinking — to which I am reduced these days — in the abstract, hit-or-miss way, which only can be called scientific, is much like fishing.

One finds a line tethered to any trifle which serves as text. If he strides over it and walks on it is all the same; he has lost nothing, except in a negative way, what he might have had. One grieves much if one loses a dollar; not at all, if he only steps over the roll of

bills his neighbour behind picks up. He has not lost it.

He may pick up the line and, feeling no bite, lay it down again.

He may feel the least motion at the other end and begin eagerly to reel in, not always to catch the fish. The line may break, there may be only a snag at the end of it, but if he is true fisherman and thinker he expects a fish — a nugget of truth. Perhaps it is one that " comes over us " as we say, and makes us instantly conscious that henceforth, forever, we are quite new creatures.

It is a queer feeling, this sudden looking back at what one was a moment before — perhaps with regret, but often with a deep drawn " Thank God."

Mr. Kennedy seems to have time to sit here in the shade with me and help reel in — never jerking on purpose to break the line as some would do — and small blame to them!

What was it to-day?

We fell to talking of how hard God seems to have tried — Fenelon would not wish me to speak of him so — but humanly speaking — and humanly seeing — he seems to have tried to divide his greatest gifts among men so as to satisfy them all.

"What do you call his greatest gifts?" he asked.

"Why," said I, "time and brains and happiness and beauty —"

"And health and money?" he asked.

"And influence," I added. "Are there any others that rank with these seven?"

"How did he divide the time?" he asked, a bit curious.

I told him that he seemed to have divided the time evenly so far as we could see. One man's day and week and year; his night and day and twilight, Sabbath and week-time are exactly as long as any of his neighbours', *and they all know that it is so.*

"Well," he laughed, "who complains?"

"Everyone," I answered, "some find the days long and tiresome, some fret because they are too short; some think the years creep, some say they fly. We all find fault."

"I admit," he laughed, "that you have made your point. Now, how about the brains?"

"I don't know," I answered, "sometimes I wonder if he did not draw cuts himself after he had divided the whole lot into big and little piles, to see who should have which. There seems to have been no plan at all, some get

more, many get less, and yet it seems to have been the most satisfactory distribution of the seven, for he managed so cleverly that every man *thinks he has the lion's share.* No one seems to covet his neighbours brains. His own are so evidently superior that he does not consider it good taste to mention it."

"Take beauty next," he begged. "Do you mean personal beauty?"

I told him "no" emphatically. That is not one of the *first* seven, it may attain unto the *second.*

It is the beauty of outward nature, of water and forest, mountain and motion, of lovely women and children and manhood and virtue and holiness. It is poured out all about us and each man and woman not only may but must take all that he can carry and stow away.

Everyone has all he wants of it — else he would take more, only — why should we load ourselves down with it when there are so many things we desire so much more? There is no rivalry of possession when our having makes none poorer; where is the zest then in obtaining?

"Influence, next?" he asked.

"You tell how that is portioned out," I

said. "I've thought but am not satisfied that I know."

"First," he answered, "we assume that it is a blessing, even if it be bad?"

"Yes," I said, "it is power. All power is good."

"I think," he said slowly, "a man has to earn it, right honestly."

"Except that he inherits?" I suggested.

"Yes," he admitted, "influence may be inherited, but inherited influence is so easily and early lost. Unless one countersigns, *visés* it with his own hand, it is null and void. Like inherited money it is easy to lose, and to keep."

"Now we have come to health. I suppose you will say we have to earn that too," he laughed.

"We shall find this more complicated, I fear," was my reply. "We inherit some, all perhaps. As to the keeping, we are coworkers with God. Usually we have more than we deserve, for we all know we do not deserve much. Sometimes God takes it away — apparently just to see what we shall say. He did that to Job. Now you explain about the wealth, for I want to give my own pet theory of happiness."

"It was not wealth — it was money we were to call it," he said, correcting me properly.

"He just threw the money, riches, down to see us scramble for it! He watches us at it and marks the Deportment on our Grade-card accordingly."

"If a man scrambles too hard for this one blessing —" I had not ended when he went on — a rare thing in him. He usually pays his friends the compliment to listen through and even to let them finish the final words of their sentences.

"— he loses the other six, of course. That is his own lookout. We throw out what is less valuable when we have an opportunity to fill our pockets with what we desire more, of course. It is the wise thing to do."

"Everyone gets all he wants?" I asked dubiously, "as of beauty?"

"No one gets as much as he wants," he answered, "that is where the fairness comes in. The amount that every scrambler fails to get is practically the same."

"Now, I'll explain the happiness," I said, and paused.

"Well?"

"It is so ridiculous!" I apologised.

"You keep me in cruel suspense," he protested and I went on with my nonsense:

"In one way it is just the opposite of the brains. No one thinks he has the most, for any length of time. Most people think they have only a fraction of what they need and deserve.

"I believe it is divided, distributed rather, exactly like time, only no one suspects it. Everyone has precisely the same." I went on unmoved by his exclamation.

"I knew you would be surprised. I do not mean that each one has the same amount of happiness quite, but that the algebraic sum of his joys and sorrows would be precisely the same as any others — zero perhaps.

"I am not prepared to say that we do not have any happiness, either. We have no scale to weigh our joys in or our sorrows — but God has. For instance, I have had most intense and abounding and unbounded joy — and I have suffered intensely too. If God would eliminate for me the equal quantities, what would be left? — zero? Abram has had his happiness and suffering; if those were balanced might not the result be zero? Mary Anne Wallace has had her stolid pleasure and sorrow — do they balance?"

I was ashamed to have kept him so long studying on one of my pet hobbies, but he never gave me one hint that he was weary of it — nor have you!

It is strange that I seem to be outgrowing the feeling that I must be forever a burden, and half believing that but for me another life would be darker.

It is dreadful to put it into words but we submit to be crowned sometimes with a glory we know is quite subjective, not in our minds but in some others. Love endows us with all the virtues we desire to have only because it discerns in us the power to wish for them.

We do not talk of it. We have ten thousand other things to read and speak about. The world is full of beauties which have all to be translated into language.

Sometimes no English word will express a thought, and a Hindu or Arabic or Persian word must do duty and then be translated at great length — perhaps by means of a long eastern story into whose web can be woven the idea so deftly that it may be descried only by an off-glance of the mind. The more delicate and fragile the thought the more ineffable is the pleasure of expression and de-

tection, the more rapturous the common feeling of appreciation, the more exquisite the thought-child born of such intercourse.

There are long silences from which I rouse myself and ask:

"Where were you?"

"In the temple at Ramesseram" or "at Madura" he will answer, or "Puri, watching the pilgrims arrive. And you?"

"And I," I answer, "was sitting on the long gallery of the Woodlands, looking off to the Snows, to Kinchinjunga where the cruel Hindu gods were born and from which they descended with lolling tongues and leering eyes to bind the sweet Hindu women in fetters no human fiends could have invented."

"My dear," he begs, "don't sully the whiteness of those snows with such thoughts. Look again, at their glory!"

Do you know that if you look long through an opera glass at fields of snow, every edge and point becomes a prism and all the colours of the rainbow are thrown about them? So, when he holds my mind fixed on a subject, I see outlines and shadows and colours, pure or shattered, surrounding every object brought to view.

I fear Amy is busy as ever.

"My dear," I beg, "you may forget yourselves, but don't forget each other," and she laughs back, "There is no other. We are all one and we are bidden to forget it."

"This double one which is an 'it' is very stupid," I reply. After all I suspect that there are times when they forget that they have Johnny Ames' broken collar bone on their hands and old Maria's rheumatics and cough to pray about.

XLVII

TUESDAY already and you go on Saturday! You'll never, never know what you have been to me.

One more Club meeting? Yes but it is a question how to use the time. We held high carnival last night. When we could not decide where to meet I said each one should propose a place and we would draw cuts — provided none should propose his own town.

How did we draw cuts? Oh, we carved the names on sticks and made a little nominating speech as we dropped them into the turban of poor old Shah Allum, whom General Lake entering Delhi looked upon as the last of the Moguls, "disfigured by the loss of his eyes." Thank God I am not that!

Of course everybody wanted to go to a different place, and at last Cupid asked Justice — who alone had not voted —"What do you say, Justice?" And she answered "Leave it to the President to choose," and before I knew it the Secretary had cast the vote.

My mind was all made up, and in five minutes we were all sitting before the Temple of Neptune at Paestum. The Apennines stand back from the shore a little there, and there is a glorious plain, and the sunset was a conflagration.

Each of us was to tell the most beautiful thing he had seen. It made you think of Paradise and the Peri.

We began disastrously. One said perfunctorily "his mother's smile," another his "bride's eyes," someone else "the forgiveness in his father's face," and a fourth something equally far from our intent.

Being President, you know, I had to call a halt and explain that it was not to be an experience meeting. We were not to give petty personal things.

Then they all kept still. I urged them to occupy the time, but no one said a word. I knew they had all gathered plenty of "eye-crops" as Mr. Beecher called them, and I told them so. Then I grew desperate and began calling by name:

"Michelangelo!"

He did not speak at first but I heard him rise and knew he was thinking.

"I think," he said, "the most beautiful

thing I ever saw was a block of marble fresh from the quarry."

"Milton!"

"Some illuminated manuscripts in Venice."

"Bartimaeus!"

"A face."

"Ossian!"

"A storm at sea."

"Cupid!"

His bow gave a twang.

"I never saw anything at all."

"Justice?"

"The hand that gave me my scales and fastened the bandage over my eyes."

There was a hush after that and I added:

"Yes, the hand that put the bandages over all our eyes."

The Captain has cabled Helen to meet him in San Francisco — she does not know exactly when. His letter will tell, but he could not wait for her to learn from that that he was coming.

Thomas came about ten this morning to show me a word he had printed in big humpy letters. I told him I would study over his puzzle if he would leave it. I did not want him to watch me. Evidently he did it of his

own accord, for when Mr. Kennedy came he didn't seem to know about it. How blind they think me!

I told him just a bit — when Willie Mathews went by with the baby crying — about Cupid's account of his infancy when Mrs. Somnus used to let little Morpheus come over to Venus' and play, or they went together over to the Noxes to see Mors.

"What are the conditions of membership in your Club?" he asked.

"Blindness, of course," I replied.

"Have you a waiting list?"

"No, not exactly," I said, "we vote them in willy-nilly as soon as we discover them."

"Do you never black-ball?" His voice sounded so serious!

"Only once, that I remember," I answered.

"When?"

"Long ago."

"Man or woman?"

"Man."

"Are you forbidden to tell who it was?" he queried.

"Not forbidden to tell you," I laughed, and went on: "He was an Egyptian — is yet — who lived in Moses' time — a beggar. Moses was in the Nile bathing when he saw

him walking along the bank, feeling with his stick."

"Well?" when I waited.

"Moses was so sorry for him that he prayed very earnestly to God that his sight might be returned. God answered his prayer and opened the man's eyes."

"Moses must have been very happy," he said musingly.

"No, he was not," I went on. "The first thing the man did was to spy Moses' clothes lying on the bank and to make off with them."

"I suppose Moses was so meek he let him go as the old Bishop did Jean Valjean —?"

"No, he did not," I interrupted. "He prayed God to make the man blind again."

"*Moses?*" Mr. Kennedy asked incredulously. "And what did God say?"

"He refused, and told Moses to remember before he prayed again: 'I am wiser concerning my creature than thou.' He knows who deserve eyes and who do not — *haec fabula docet,*" I ended a bit sadly.

"So you black-balled him?" he asked to himself.

"Yes," I said. "You see, he was only entitled to *honourary* membership and we did not consider him fit."

"I think you cut off your own noses," he laughed. "I fancy such a member would be an interesting study. He may have needed those garments more than Moses, as much as Jean Valjean needed that first loaf of bread."

Helen came then, happy as a lark. "Ralph had cabled" and "*had* we heard? and he was going to bring this and that."

When we reminded her that she had three months leeway before Ralph even started she quieted down and we all straggled back to Newton.

We have just heard of the death of dear old Dr. Andrews. Yes, Dr. Ephraim Andrews. He was our favourite "exchange."

"Can you remember him so long ago?" Helen asked.

"I think you would have remembered," I remarked, "if he had told your father that his 'Amen' at the end of a sermon sounded to him like 'Take-that-or-be-damned'!"

XLVIII

IT was so warm last night that the others planned a walk. When they had started and I found they were only going into the orchard I surprised Mr. Kennedy by asking if we might not go too. He hesitated a little and it did seem a wild adventure for me. In my mental geography it is one of the blank spaces marked with the old legend: *Hic sunt leones.*"

I am so afraid you see how happy I am! And that you know how I felt when he handed me down the step as naturally as if we could both see and he was taking me out to dinner. There was such an old-timy feeling that he was taking care of me, and such a sense of happy need!

I tried not to stumble or feel out with my hand. No one knows how hard it is to keep from feeling ahead like a blind-man's-buff — or bough — whichever they've decided upon. He said that there was no moon and that it was quite dark and that there was not the

least dew, feeling with his hand. I held up my skirts only to keep my free hand engaged, lest it forget.

It was much further to the gate than I remembered. When we reached the smooth ground under the trees we paced back and forth a long time.

"Won't you come over with Amy and inspect my new home?" he asked. "I'm planning a honeysuckle arbour to run out this way."

"You should build an underground passage," I said, "as Mr. Mole did to Mrs. Mouse's hole where little Thumbling lived."

"No, indeed," he laughed, "Little Thumbling would not use it and flew away."

He told me how New York had seemed after India. He was very glad to be home but he felt like writing a few "Persian Letters" back to his Hindu and Moslem friends.

"We are all very ridiculous to think they are absurd," he remarked.

"And they unfortunate to think we are wrong?" I added, not at all intending the upward inflection.

"Shakespeare did not seem to love the night," he said later. "To him it was a

dragon, and Darkness was the dragon's wing."

"He may have had the Chinese fondness for dragons," I replied perversely. "A dragon is only 'a seeing creature' and one who loved dragons could cuddle down very happily under a wing, I presume."

I forget his answer, for the tone in which it was given was that same old-time assumption of responsibility for me, and a feeling came over me that if he insisted upon doing it himself I would not mind being wrapped in the "blanket of the dark" and put to sleep forever — petrified, as I used to dream, in my present mood.

Nothing more was said and soon he turned toward the gate, which was not easy to find in the dark. When I put out my hand to see if we were safely through, he caught it and laid it also on his arm.

You remember Dea? I am afraid Amy has known why I loved to hear her read of her.

"What is it that you call seeing?" she asked. "For me I cannot see! I know. It seems to me that to see means to hide," because, poor child, she had never seen!

If she had known what sight was, could she

have called her blindness "divinely incurable?"

"Do souls," Ursus growls at me —"Booby! do souls require eyes to see each other?"

After Gwynplaine had gone he listened to her and went muttering to himself:

"Dark! This is the first time she ever uttered that word." And she:

"It is now that I am blind. I knew not what night was. It is Absence."

I wonder if one might ever — having eyes — say: "I knew not what Sight was. It is presence?"

They tell me that the light of the farthest star, seen through a glass, has been two million years upon its way to us. Why should any of us despair of light when some far star or sun may have foreseen our darkness and sent forth its beams to us two million years ago? Can we not await their coming in patient trust?

Yes, I know this must be our last day, and I cannot thank you duly for your kind patience. I have not done what I meant to do. Indeed, though, I had not a plan marked out so plainly that I can reproach myself seriously for wandering. Events which I could

not foresee have filled my mind more than I thought possible.

For years Amy and I lived on here with our mother in the house that was dear to her, from the time she wandered, widowed, to her father's home.

Since mother went we have come back when we were tired with travel, to live more quietly still — she with her work, I with my books and letters. How could we dream that our quiet house would fill with happy friends, and be the scene of Cupid's machinations! Mr. Nelson and you and Helen and Mr. Kennedy have all helped to make me so happy.

Sit nearer, dear. There is one thing more. I do not know how to tell you. Perhaps they know that I know it, perhaps not, but, since you have known so long that it would come, I do not mind you knowing the manner of its coming.

You remember Dea's "To be blind and to be loved — what happier fate?"

I had come to believe that I was loved, and had allowed myself of late to be — half happy.

Yes, only half. A girl may be content to

be loved, but a woman knows that it is the lesser half of joy only to receive.

It is the giving which counts, and what had I to give? Self is the dollar mark which shows what the numerals mean, and *my*self was but a blurred and blackened stain.

You are right, dear. Being blind I could give all, but like other coin the coin of love depends for value on its purchasing power. The gift is smaller as there is less need in the receiver.

Oh, yes, I know how it seems to you. Now will you listen? It is not easy to delay the telling.

Last night Mr. Kennedy came over late, I had been sitting alone for an hour perhaps. I heard Thomas open the gate for him.

"I hoped you'd come," I said, extending my hand, which he did not take. I have thought that hand-shaking must be quite an unknown custom in India — besides, it was too dark.

"I need a new scrap to think about," I said as gaily as I could. "Have we exhausted your precious Novalis?"

"Never," he laughed, "and before we launch into any Hindoo nonsense I'll teach

you a beautiful text." Then in a steady monotone:

"Now I know when will come the last morning; when the Light no more scares away the Night and Love."

Twice he said it, before I repeated — trying to do it lightly:

"Now I know when will come the last morning: when the Light no more scares away the Night and Love."

"How could he say that?" I asked. "How did he know?"

"I know," he answered. "He tells us: 'I hold fast an eternal, unchangeable faith in the heaven of the Night — and its sun, the Beloved.'"

After he had gone — we had talked an hour perhaps — I waited for Amy and Mr. Nelson — How can I tell you!

They came slowly up the willow walk.

As they entered the side gate, where they always seem to pause, Amy was speaking and I heard her final question:

"You do not think Oudene suspects it yet?"

"Suspects what, dear?"

"That Mr. Kennedy is blind too?"

There was a little pause before he answered:

"I've wondered."

THE END

SEP 27 1911

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